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THE UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

FRANK W. HASTINGS

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The UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

The UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

PREFACE

Once upon a midnight roaring, as Mariah
lay a snoring—
Snoring such snores as no mortal ever
snored before,
My soul refused to slumber, and it wandered
into the days of yore;
And I yelled in wildest whispers:
Can this be the creature I once adored?
Here I clawed my auburn whiskers,
still repeating,
Can, O can this be the creature
I once adored?

EPITAPH

TO THE EVERLASTING, EVER-PRESENT, EVER-DIGNIFIED, EVER-PLENTIFUL AND NEVER-MURMURING WEATHER, THESE EVIDENCES OF DEMENTIA ARE INSCRIBED.

The Untamed Philosopher

The UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

AT HOME AND WITH

THE PLUGONIANS OF PLUGOLIA

Being a Tale of Hens and some other People

by FRANK W. HASTINGS

AUTHOR OF SEVERAL WIDELY UNKNOWN WORKS

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO.

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The Untamed Philosopher

CHAPTER THE FIRST

MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE is rightly said to be a divine institution, but in the happiest marriages it requires only about two years' time for the bulk of the divinity to somewhat evaporate, and then the poor matrimonial voyagers awake to the fact that we are all human beings, and some of us considerably human at that.

By the law of contrasts!

No other explanation can be given why beauty and ugliness, brains and idiocy, culture and ignorance, goodness and badness become tangled up in matrimony.

It is natural to admire that quality in others which is an aching void in one's own composition, whether the missing element be lovable or kickable.

By the law of contrasts!

It, too, must be of divine origin, for by it many beings absolutely destitute of one hugable qualification, except some physical, intellectual, or spiritual deformity, have folded unto themselves perfect gems of helpmeets—wretches that otherwise would have been obliged to promenade the byways and hedges of life alone and solitary. Meantime the sold-out angels gnash their teeth and marvel aloud why they didn't allow them to go to—when it is too late.

Funny, isn't it, we failed to notice that the creature had deep red hair, and lots of it, until the sparks began to fly; and it's funny again that the sparks never fly until after Hymen has officiated.

Curious fellow, that Hymen!

Oh, could we have known in season that our Charlies would some day caress us with the fire shovel, and our Daisies would crown our bald heads with a squash pie, direct from the oven—how different would have been the lurid thusly!

But we didn't until we learned it—not until after we had nearly murdered five venerable fossils who attempted to tell us—not until

"Caress us with a fire shovel"

clammy experience drove the fact right into our thick heads.

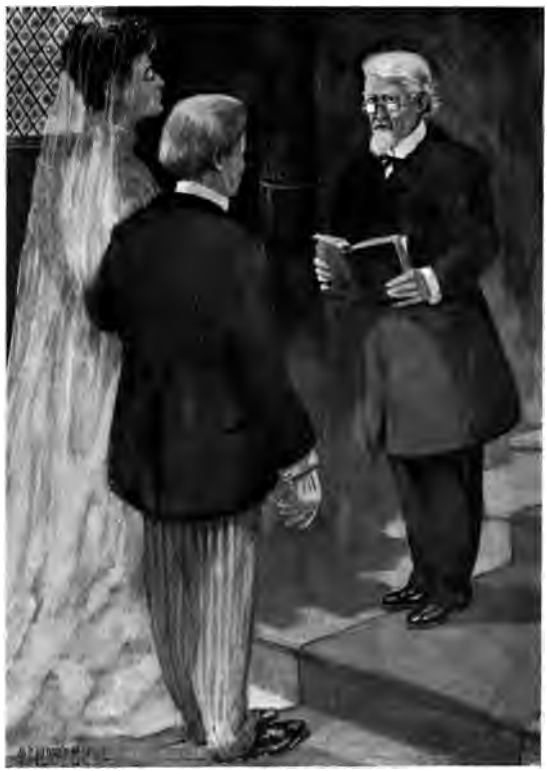
Well, it is stated on good authority that the chief object of life should be the accumulation of knowledge.

By the law of contrasts!

Undoubtedly that law has been in operation for ages, numbering its victims by the million; yet of the vast horde who have wallowed in matrimonial honey and mire, also that innumerable embryo army which is destined by all the slobber of a blissful courtship soon to enter the shadows of wedlock, the astounding power of contrast, as a producer of certain effects, has escaped observation. Most freely I admit it never occurred to me until after I had been led to the marriage altar by a blushing maid. Then reason gradually returned and I endeavored to account for numerous peculiar circumstances in my changed existence; however, I will truthfully rehearse the cold facts and let a candid world gather therefrom such crumbs of comfort as may be.

Mariah J. Jenks and myself became one by actual marriage!

For the purposes of these thrilling yarns it



"Mariah J. Jenks and myself became one by actual marriage."

is unnecessary to repeat the sweet and sickening details which brought about that relationship. Suffice it to say, that a proposition tending directly to that result was submitted by myself to the aforesaid Mariah, and she, after proper feminine deliberation and several long, softly sighed nays, having the genuine yea accent, finally and fully collapsed in my arms.

O—ee me—ee—whye—Ie—e—dovee—ever was—ee. (Curtain.)

We were married by the Rev. T. S. Pax, Mrs. Pax serving as bridesmaid, groomsman, and witness.

Thus simply was the ceremony solemnized, yet withal solidly performed. I say solidly performed—that I went through the operation in a substantial manner is at least beyond question. If there is any doubt in the matter to Mariah belongs the censure.

Listen!

I distinctly answered yes five times to each question of the marriage service, besides working in fourteen perfectly audible yeses, sort of between times, and to make the thing absolutely sure I was continually bowing my head,

about eleven wags to the minute I should judge—honest affirmative bobs, every one of them.

But Mariah stood like a piece of statuary in midwinter during the ordeal, making no response either by word, look, or motion, a style of proceeding which I considered very singular; but she said later that she thought I had done enough answering for one family.

Well, this was our first wedding experience, and the supposition is not reasonable that we should go through it as gracefully as a veteran in the business—Brigham Young, for instance —or as at fashionable weddings, wherein the contracting parties give daily public rehearsals for eight weeks before the occurrence of the real event, Wednesday and Saturday afternoon matinees included.

However, laying all criticism aside, that simple performance has withstood several years of matrimonial blizzards and domestic calms. We are yet one; still far enough adown the road so that either of us can express an individual and distinct opinion without kissing the other immediately after.

Not until that hazy period of conjugal life

is reached and past can one render judgment as to the pros or cons of married life, for the delightful reason that one at that stage of his existence has no judgment. What was once brain is now a shapeless, sticky mass.

But the ship is launched. Onward she sails through petty disputes and broken chairs, intemperance and soiled carpets, other loves and elopements, into the beautiful harbor of divorce—unless, peradventure, the love aboard is of the right make and sufficient in quantity to balance the craft.

As an amateur husband I achieved the usual success, and if society had not been constructed on the ridiculous plan whereby one must have money, bonnets, and things, many of my troubles would have been avoided, but long since I learned to pass unnoticed matters of so trifling a nature. I have become so skillful, even, that a heavenly smile radiates from every crack and crevice of my noble features as I chew and try to swallow Mariah's sour bread.

As a matter of course I always expect a codfish salad after I have ordered fricasseed swine. Yet, why allow things of so little import to create family disturbance?

It's foolishness personified!

With all her failings, I must, in justice to Mariah, state that she never used a horsewhip on me; never attempted to make me into sausage; never staggered into my presence intoxicated. In fact she was quite free from all antics of that description; but in affairs outside the commonplace, I am sorry to be obliged to confess, there seemed to be a terrible deficiency in her internal head apparel.

By the law of contrasts!

As between Mariah and myself, I discovered shortly after regaining my normal health, there existed a vast intellectual vacuum.

To Mariah I ascribed all the vacuum; to myself belonged the entire vastness. In her giddy mind lay the fascination which had lured a lovely blossom into connubial bonds. It was the old story—merely the attraction of opposites—which in our case signified that—but why argue? To this day, I have been unable to convince her that I am it.

How many times, when I have been giving expression to stupendous thoughts—ideas captured in the highest realms of mental altitudes

" To Mariah I ascribed all the vacuum "

—has Mariah rudely interrupted me by gushing forth a torrent of nonsense!

But of that later, and in concluding this chapter I will only say that during our courtship I passed many sleepless nights in useless worry lest all the fellows would want Mariah, and possibly win her; but now I am wondering, in a slight way, very slightly as yet, please remember—scarcely a ripple—why I or anybody else should ever have wanted such a creature.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

WORK

THE first obstruction of any account run against in our trip arose over the labor question, and had I not been a man of deep tact, beautiful generosity, and a profound strategist, in all probability our combined hearts would have become twain.

I must refer briefly to the past—Mariah was an heiress.

By inheritance she was the owner of a farm; also proprietor of some cattle, horses, sheep, swine, cats, hens, a dog, and one rooster.

For a youth without special advantages, utterly destitute of any dead and buried foreign titles, with even his credit so poor that he was unable to get into debt, to raise himself up from a common male boyhood to be the husband of an heiress of such magnitude, was a great scheme well carried out. Yet, in the light of subsequent knowledge, I honestly believe it would have been much more brilliant

to have wooed and won some millionaire's only child and daughter.

I can say, in all candor, trusting that the statement will be credited by thinking people, I should have loved Mariah just as ardently had she been worth millions of dollars, clear cash, as possessing only a few paltry acres, hens, etc., etc.

Now farming is the science of lubrication by actual perspiration, which in our tongue means work, and work is extremely distasteful to my weary nature.

Work is one of the evils that must exist, and like all evils I have made a heroic struggle to shun it; but I regret to say that many times my attempts have been unsuccessful—in avoiding labor, I mean.

Alas! By some curious freak of nature in my composition, there was a fineness of fibre, a tired feeling, which would not permit me to become ecstatic over anything that contained even a suggestion of physical labor.

I could ride for miles through rural districts, passing acres of storm-lodged grain, and observe the horny-fisted sons of toil mutilate the aforesaid grain with an instrument called a

"Bring that egg in"

scythe, rivulets of aromatic perspiration rippling, sparkling, and dancing across their broad shoulder blades, but not a poetical emotion would arise to increase the pulsations of my steely heart—not a one.

Even when the cackling of the hens announced the advent into this cruel world of another egg, I remained calm and motionless, unless invited, as I frequently was by Mariah, to "bring that egg in." I do not desire it understood that I maliciously reposed, when property would waste from lack of attention —merely this,—I believe in economizing my vital forces for use in some mighty emergency.

To illustrate: I considered it a foolish and extravagant use of time and strength, the making of seventeen hundred and fifty journeys, daily, to the hennery, when, according to my judgment, one trip per day answered all the practical demands of the case.

But Mariah reasoned in this way: "An egg left in the nest is a temptation in the path of an honest hen and when a hen once gets to eating eggs, she's a ruined hen." As if a hen was possessed of an immortal soul!

And Mariah?

Mariah was positively unhappy unless engaged in some labor. To her work was a luxury. At 4.15 A. M., she would, without apparent effort, wrench herself from slumber, and plunge smilingly into the daily drudgeries, and if by chance there was a spare moment, the insane creature would seize an old rag or paper and go tearing up and down the house, assassinating in a most brutal manner innocent flies.

Oh, to this day, there is a feeling of sickness tinged with sadness permeating my entire system as I think of a nature so coarsely endowed! What if all were possessed of such a spirit as Mariah's. What would become of the world?

Her soul was in her vocation. From the greatest to the smallest detail of agricultural affairs she seemed enraptured.

Work?

Why, because Mariah said she couldn't afford to hire a man. The farm was not large enough to support so many men.

Strange logic. Didn't the farm, previous to our marriage, produce the necessary funds for hired labor and a surplus over? Yes.

Could it be that that woman had inveigled me into wedlock purely for the labor there was concentrated in my frail form, as she would buy a horse or an ox? The idea nearly broke my heart.

The perfidy concealed in some breasts!

That labor was one of the great necessities, in fact, the chief instrument in materializing all earthly comforts, Mariah's ideas and mine were a perfect coincidence. Our diversity of opinion arose, not from the fact itself, but from the peculiarities arising therefrom. My idea of labor was simply this: Let somebody else perform the vulgar deed; I considered the mind, with a very small portion of the body worked in merely for exercise, as the only object worthy of a really serious life, while Mariah preached and practiced all physical labor, with just enough brain worked in to keep abreast of the rest of civilization.

Stupidity!

But if she had practiced her theories and omitted the preaching much happiness would have been added to my troubled life.

She wouldn't.

Indeed, I do not now recall an opportunity

Mariah missed of trying to impress upon me the correctness of her ways. The moment I sat down for meditation, endeavoring to evolve some project for the elevation of myself and the world at large,—that moment the meeting opened and my sensitive nature was compelled to absorb a volley of nonsensical stuff of which the following is a fair sample:

As long as the stomach of man clawed the air for something to eat, as long as people persisted in the foolish habit of wearing clothing and living in houses and hankering after comforts generally, so long had somebody got to work. Nothing could be accomplished without work. Folks became weak and dyspeptic without work. Lots and lots of men, and boys too, got to drinking and acting just because they wouldn't work. People that didn't feel any responsibility of life only to be burdens for those who worked ought to be buried. What was the sense of sitting down and thinking all the time, so long as my thoughts didn't amount to anything.

She wished the whole tramp kingdom, past, present, and future, was buried in the crater of Mt. Vesuvius.

And then there was Thomas Plug!

(Mariah's brilliant dissertations on the labor question were always brought to a sublime finish by flourishing the marvelous feats of Thomas Plug before me.)

Couldn't I see what work had done for him? Commenced without a cent, bought the farm and paid for it and fixed up the buildings and things and set out shade trees and bought a nice carriage and was one of the town officers, and,—Oh, dear me! volumes of such frivolous ideas, too light for repetition.

Confound the Plug creation, anyhow!

It is terrible to be misunderstood, horrible not to feel the power of appreciation. I was willing, nay even anxious to labor, but I had delicate scruples as to the nature of the exertion.

There were devices surging, ever wiggling through my cranium which I honestly felt were doomed to revolutionize society—thoughts destined to remodel human existence. True, I had not as yet put any of those great sentiments into shape to materialize, for the reason that my conscience would not permit me to spring upon an unsuspecting world any

scheme not perfected in all its details, in the completion of which Mariah was no end of annoyance by her practical notions. For instance, suppose just at that point wherein Shakespeare causes Hamlet to ejaculate:

> "Punch, brother! punch, punch with care!
> Punch in the presence of the passenjare!"

Suppose, I say, Shakespeare's wife had shrieked, "Bill, go and paris-green the potato bugs," at the precise moment he had penned the first "punch," in all reasonable probability the beautiful passage above quoted would have been lost to the world.

The fact is, the intellectual and the physical and potato bugs, etc., are separate and distinct qualities. When one's soul is soaring about in the regions of stupendous thought, he or she can't gracefully wield the barn shovel.

The idea of holding me up in comparison—even with Thomas Plug!

Not but the Plug creation is a useful and necessary part of humanity, but if one isn't a Plug by nature, one cannot become a successful Plug by cultivation.

On this point Mariah is lacking in fine dis-

crimination—fails to grasp the true purport of my lofty intents. Doesn't see why the Plug way of life isn't the correct way. That certain people see nothing, feel nothing, know nothing beyond a narrow horizon, eat and drink and sleep as sweetly contented as the swine, plodding along with the patience of an ox, their happiness perfect and peace unmarred, is sufficient unto Mariah.

Again, Mariah (it fills my soul with sorrow to say it) chooses not to consider the awful struggles of my early life, wherein I was literally obliged to work or starve, her growing disposition seems to indicate that it is work or starvation, now, with me. Daily her views along that line are becoming more and more suggestive, and the end I fear makes me a drudge,—possibly a mendicant in Mariah's home.

Yet again the persistent, aggravating way she has of implying that I am the only idle man in this great world!

(I am not idle, but in spite of all the brilliant arguments I have offered to the contrary, Mariah continues to believe I am.)

Why, it is stated on good authority that

there are in the United States alone two million idlers—two million people that won't work!

Think of it—two million beings that refuse to perspire and earn their doughnuts.

But suppose, just for argument, that I am a full-fledged, genuine tramp and should become insane and go to work—what then?

There would yet remain one million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine people not laboring.

What could one frail man accomplish against an army of one million nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine?

"Help bury some of them," interrupted Mariah.

"But," said I, "it would be most horrible inhumanity to bury them alive." Over this humane and sensible remark, Mariah became angry and said:—Didn't I know any better than that? She, as one of the workers of the world, had got tired of helping to carry the drones, the blood-sucking, good-for-nothing idlers, the shiftless, crime-committing, prison-filling, devil-raising crowd. It was much bet-

ter to be a Plug and faithfully to perform the duties of a Plug, than to be a lazy, shirking reptile on the face of the earth, and somewhere the Plugs would be rewarded, if not here; but the indolent, the devourers of other people's industry and thrift,—" Yes, I repeat it," Mariah fairly shrieked, " bury them."

It was worse than useless to attempt argument with Mariah in such a condition of mind, but way down in the shady depths of my soul, far beyond the hearing of mortal ear, I whispered that a person ought not to be buried until after death.

But on one score I have no occasion for regret. I always allowed Mariah to work all she wished to, with touching self-denial extending to her the privilege of bringing in the wood and other light tasks, which properly belonged to me to perform. If, in my loving watchfulness over Mariah, I detected her especially despondent, I would immediately after supper snap asunder home ties and spend the evening down at the store court, thus allowing her the additional joy of milking the cows, caring for the horses, and the like.

How ennobling such self-sacrifice!

"A Plug"

Without argument I admitted that the Plugs had worked the mines, tilled the soil, built ships and railroads, woven wires all over the earth, and fixed up things generally in a way to make God's country more desirable as a place of residence, but that wasn't the point. The Plugs die every now and then from over-exertion or by accident and I was using every precaution to preserve my endangered life.

Strange, even barbarous, the way Mariah tossed my life about.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

LOVE

AFTER such magnanimity as I had evinced towards Mariah, the natural inference would have been that our married life must have been a bed of roses—many-tinted and perfumed.

But alas for the perversity of the human heart, the facts of the case were far different. She did not have that reverence for me as the head of the family, to which I was justly entitled. There was something wrong yet. Plainly I had not fathomed all the mysteries of the hymenean shadows.

Falling in love and tumbling into matrimony, though dauby and difficult, is simplicity itself in comparison with keeping those fires of affection burning at just the right temperature to last all along down the road which requires fifty years, more or less, to travel, and which is strewn with diamonds and mire and tears and smiles.

THE UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

Philosophers are practically agreed that "Love is the greatest thing in the world."

But like all great things love is not properly comprehended by the masses. The thing is not studied; is not looked into from the right point of view, to produce great results in the majority of cases. By humanity at large, love is, and means, only the concentration of a certain amount of affection, according to the capacity of the patient, upon some object of the opposite sex, which is in fact merely one of the smallest rudiments of love.

The sad condition of life in which I found myself, led me to thoroughly investigate the laws of love, and I discovered that the great uplifting principle of love was to love one's self above all and all the time. Strict adherence to that rule means happiness conjugally and prosperity generally.

For the first two weeks of our married existence I honestly loved Mariah a little better than myself, but in so doing I observed there was something wrong; that to pursue such a course would be ruinous to Mariah and the generations to follow. Already she had a disagreeably familiar way of connecting me with

various labors. The problem must be solved or down went my dignity; my position as the sublime figurehead of the family universe.

In my keen researches I learned that in the proper application of love lay the secret; the balm which was to sustain my supremacy. I reduced this loving business to an accurate science, and how beautiful, how majestic, how absolutely large is love when administered in skillful doses. I must love myself best, which I immediately proceeded to do.

Set it down as an indisputable fact, if you are going to maintain your dignity as head of a family, or reap your share of earthly shekels and glory, you must love yourself—love with an intensity that will enable you to nobly appropriate other people's interests to your own good. Sit up nights, if necessary, and crawl all around through your soul and worship your own darling self.

Excuse my cringing modesty while I extract from my gilded career lucid examples to the point.

Now I love Mariah; I love our very several offspring; I love the world and the people therein, with the exception of a few dozens.

I love numerous other calamities, but the sum total of all that love, immense as it is, is as nothing in comparison with that unquenchable conflagration of consuming love which I keep roaring night and day for myself.

It's that, and not my affection for David B. Hill, which elects me President of the United States every now and then. That brilliant oration, that bewitching music, that profound sermon to which you listened in a thrilled condition, and which you ascribed to my goodness, genius, or patriotism, as the case might be, were simply brains and self-love.

Incidentally the reasons you assign were an inspiration to me, but the great motive power, the unseen force that hustled about and got me there was full-blossomed adoration for myself.

It was the pleasure the applause of the world gave; the money there was in the performance; the tickling sensation way in a remote and concealed corner of my being, that possibly my name would go stalking and crashing and making an unearthly racket generally, off down through the centuries.

Love of that high excellence does not come

"For several years, three times daily did I stand before a large mirror and gaze at myself."

at one's beck and call at any moment, to be ruthlessly cast aside after using. No, it must be sought after, coddled, vigorously cultivated, and when once attained, firmly held on to.

To raise myself up to the proper standard of love, I was compelled to pass through a most energetic course of training self-imposed.

For several years, three times daily, not less than thirty minutes at each time, did I stand before a large mirror and gaze at myself with loving, worshipful eyes. While so standing I would hug and caress and squeeze myself, at the same time talking to myself about myself in a very gentle, cooing tone of voice, uttering such sentiments as only one deeply in love with himself can utter. I counted that night lost, in which I had not dreamed about myself; dreamed how I was the center of all things; the one earthly thing whom the angels gazed on with envy, and how the worlds would fall off into space if I lost my grip.

Often when undergoing this treatment, before I became an expert as a lovist, a feeling of sadness would come over me as I thought of those streams of innocent, youthful love

that used to gush forth from my stammering soul into Mariah's ear.

Love running pure and clear and without effort! Love into which no form of selfishness entered! Love that does not crawl into one's system but just once in a lifetime! Love that seemed to be vanishing with the going years —or was it simply changing form?

As time moves along new phases of life develop, yet I can but think, had I not worked up this self-admiration, I might, with other promising people who have never studied the subject of love, have found my eye teeth sunk into oblivion, and right in the dewy green of noble manhood, discovered myself the center of attraction on some hastily constructed gallows.

Just at this point Mariah began to argue that what I had said of love was not love at all; it was hatred of mankind, self-esteem, self-glorification. "Don't you know," said she, "that love, real love, the Christ love, the true 'Love ye one another' spirit, was the only genuine love—the way itself by which 'Peace on earth; good will to all men,' would or could ever be attained? That this selfishness, this

unholy greed for wealth and fame, this taking no heed for the welfare of others is destined to ruin the world," but I scorn to repeat such scurrilities. Ideas too small for the nursery even, worthless thoughts unless a person be within several seconds of death and therefore has nothing further to do about earthly affairs.

Exceedingly curious that Mariah should hold me responsible for all the wrong in the world, but some minds are by nature curious, which is the only explanation I can give of the matter; still the fact that Mariah's mind had dwindled to such mental depths, did not anger me; rather should I go into mourning over her fast disappearing reason. Her rules for loving might work after a fashion, if everybody followed them, but in this age of progress why——good land!

If I applied her love ideas, I couldn't accumulate enough to buy raisins for my Christmas pudding.

And so Mariah and I waddled onward.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

COUNTRY

THE earth, in its annual trot around the sun, had once more brought forth July, and with it came all the comforts common to Hadaistical atmospheres.

The fatherless mosquito again slumbered upon my bedpost by day and mutilated my wasted features by night, singing in the meantime the sweetest and most profanity inspiring melodies. Briefly, all nature was at its height, from the agile bedbug down to the soaring hen hawk; from the sweet-scented thoroughwort blossom up to the pond lily. Verily, all was hustle. The justly celebrated new-mown hay also appears—the hay which so many weak-minded people have become convulsed into rhymes over, yet can never be prevailed upon to eat a mouthful of—either rhymes or hay.

Haying—blessed, sanctified haying—how often hast thou lathered my body and soul in thy perspiring embrace! For thee have I com-

mitted several transgressions, for which you in the mysterious future will have to ante up. Into thy arms, O bewitching successor of last year's haying, I plunge with mingled feelings (mostly mingled,) as I ever shall until my life and common hay shall be no longer mixed.

If one is contented in this world, it matters little as to his vocation or location, provided, of course, that the place and business is of such a nature as to keep the incumbent thereof out of those places where the windows are cased with iron bars. But if one is discontented in his work, however great or honorable the calling, he or she might just as well be jumping about in the infernal regions, so far as earthly happiness is concerned.

I did not like farming, because I felt that nature had intended me for greatness. Sometimes when hoeing cabbage, or chopping wood, I would be overcome with the feeling that I was actually committing a great sin in thus burying my talents. If such should eventually prove to be the case, the power that questions it I shall refer directly to Mariah. Doing her farmwork is enough, without being held responsible for her sins.

She said she didn't believe I was much bigger than common folks, if I was any. She much preferred being sort of medium-sized and having a comfortable home all our own, than to being a ninth-rate nobody in city or village, and living up in the top of some great high building, where she'd got to use balloons, elevators, parachutes and things in getting up to and tumbling down from. She didn't want to breathe air over after everybody, and drink water full of snakes and bugs and things. (That was Mariah's uncultured way of speaking of the scholarly bacilli.) She didn't want to be obliged to use eggs that had got to be assassinated. A man not possessed of the necessary mental requisites for becoming a Webster or a Longfellow, could so conduct himself on a farm as to become the owner of a pair of gingham shirts. "Didn't I remember James Dough?—Thought he could be very great if he only could get into some place where he wasn't. Sold his farm and went to New York city. A hawker got all his money away from him and now he has nothing, really nothing." She always knew that Jim didn't know enough to even close his eyes in slumber.

"A hawker got all his money"

That woman's talk makes me tired.

But speaking of farming and country life generally, how little is known of it, as it actually is, by outsiders.

Now and then some author fresh from the city wilds, roosts in the shade upon the hillside, of a July morning, with the mercury boiling in the hundreds, and watches the old farmer on the meadow rasping down the grass, and thereupon begins to cackle about the glistening scythe, dew-bespangled violets, the ever-gleeful bumblebee, etc., etc., and closes the song with a low sad grunt on the heavenly bliss of the farmer's lot.

Regard all such effusions as the outpouring of a weak or malicious mind, and if I were the farmer alluded to,

> I would cleave that poet's body in twain
> And leave his head upon the main,
> To wither and poetise in the rain.

That makes a very pretty poem or a first-class humorous article, but there is nothing in it with the exception of the violets, that is at all truthful to nature. Even the stately bumblebee, with his desires for chewing peo-

ple, is slandered. To substantiate this, let the aforesaid poet mow a few swaths on the same meadow—hornets' nest, mosquitoes and snakes included.

Presently he will be firmly convinced that there is a mighty difference between fact and fancy.

Country life, as a means of living, is one thing, and living in the country merely for recreation is quite another, and, whether city or country bred, but very few people have the naturalist's instinct or desire to become familiar with the wonderful colors, sounds and sights the country affords.

The average citizen's observations in nature embrace the whole landscape at a glance and produce no impression on the mind, unless something a little out of the usual order looms up to our vision, like a specially fine cluster of berries or an oddly clothed bush, when our sleepy souls arise nobly to the occasion and we exclaim in a gurgling tone, about halfway between the bass of a bullfrog and the tenor of a screech owl:

U-o-oh the—the berries!

My-e se-e those lovely fo-o-ho-lo-iage!

And there endeth the lessons of nature to the general mind. Scenes constantly before us, even in the most humble landscape, of such grandeur of color and dimensions, music so nicely arranged as to volume and accuracy in sound, earth and sky so radiantly beautiful that the highest arts of man cannot reproduce the effect to a satisfactory degree of perfection.

But what makes the cold chills circulate up and down my spine is the misleading tendency of most all literature on country life. From it one infers that all rural people have to do is to repose in the shade, whittle their corns and gaze at the hillside.

Don't get things mixed.

Here is an author who attempts a description of a farmer's life, on " Sunday morning," and it is a fair sample of what I am trying to make clear. By actual count he uses nine hundred words in a genuine whoop over the glimmering sun rays, the twittering birds, the vine clad tree, the moss-covered post, the croaking frog and sprightly cricket, etc., all of which is very pretty, but I supposed I was to learn in that chapter about what farmer so-so did that

particular Sabbath morning. Indeed the author so informed me at the close of the previous chapter, but here is all the light in that line: "The morning chores are done, and Mr. X. is ready for church."

Extremely brief and unpretending, that sentence, yet it is the only inkling in the chapter we receive of Mr. X's mode of life. The impression conveyed is that he has done nothing this morning but suck down in wall-eyed wonder the beauties of his natural surroundings.

"The morning chores are done and Mr. X. is ready for church."

Listen while I put into unvarnished English the actual meaning of that expression:—Got up (a work of itself considered by good judges a full half day's labor), climbed into a pair of fifty-cent overalls; dislocated my left shoulder pulling on my cowhide boots; built a fire in kitchen stove; cut my finger while whittling shavings for same; thought of something but didn't say a word; proceeded to the barn with the milk pails; milked; old cow slashing the air with her tail in vain attempts to murder a sweetly singing fly, succeeds in artis-

tically decorating my classic visage; endeavored to sing a sacred melody, but when pitching the tune got another slap in the mouth from the same tail; ceased singing and murmured some intense thoughts suitable to the occasion; fed horses; drove cows to pasture; ran milk through separator; pigs got out; a general race ensued; Mariah takes part and wins first money, hogs second with myself and dog a close third; breakfast; groomed horses and cleaned stables; got my shoulder joint back into place by pulling off my boots; cut off and dug out my auburn beard, (incidentally Mariah has remarked that my beard resembles barbed wire in all respects but color); peeled off and slung carefully into the corner my farmer's trousseau; bathed; donned my Sunday suit, and I was ready for church.

Oh, my poor lacerated heart!

Again the general writer in producing the conversation of his country characters causes them to use expressions in use one hundred years ago, and which now are very rarely heard even among the least scholarly of that class. It's true that agricultural communites do not flounder about in a style of expression gilded

with superb flourishes of rhetoric, yet it is also true, that one hundred years with this old world ambling along at a 2.40 gait, brings about marvelous changes, and while we poor children of the woods may not have kept abreast of the procession, we have at least been within "how are ye" distance, some of the time.

Neither is this rosey-posey class of literature, of which I have spoken, to be charged entirely to authors ignorant of country doings, for some country writers, knowing full well by a life-time association, the difference between a pumpkin and a tree-toad, yet persist in staggering along in the old heavens-orange-tinted ruts.

Only last winter Mariah was invited by an agricultural society to prepare an essay on the subject, "Farmers' Wives," and deliver it at one of their meetings. I thought I should certainly hear in her address the lot of a farmer's wife truthfully portrayed.

Well!

It appeared that that woman had rummaged through all the poetry from Chaucer down to and including James Whitcomb Riley, and

every idea that contained the least shimmer of a glimmer, of a rustle of a tint of a shade, in the meadow, on the glade, or the vines by the pines and purring whines over in the deep, deep mines, where hares get away from bears, by the stump next to the pump, by doing some big jumps, etc., formed the substance of her remarks. Just enough originality mixed in to connect the stuff. Not a clue in the whole essay did Mariah give as to the actual lives of "Farmers' Wives." Not a word about salt pork and company, chickens with choleric tendencies, emaciated calves that must have scalded milk, churning days whereon richly colored profanity came freely two hours before the butter thought of coming. Not one tender word even concerning flyspecks, a science in which Mariah had by patient industry become an authority, or threshing-machine days. In fact, nothing mentioned that distinctly marks the career of a farmer's wife.

Abandoned farms?

There are, and many more that are but poorly employed.

Why abandoned?

Because, well, because of some of the rea-

sons I have already stated and because the sum total of earthly existence, it seems, is the accumulation of wealth and greatness, neither of which is the farmer as liable to reap in such incomprehensible profusion as men of other callings. Little singular, isn't it, that I, when loaning money for Eastern enterprises, will look over and squint into and inquire about and finally loan on security that is nine times as good, yet can I be approached by a poetically inscribed postal card from the uttermost horn of the earth, asking for thousands of dollars to build, buy, or boom something and will respond with the desired amount by return mail, not even inquiring whether such a locality exists or not. By such a course, much that is valuable in the country part of New England is to-day yielding no income. Again, I put my diamonds and broadcloth and social and intellectual opportunities, and my trips to here and there and Europe, and my short days and lots of other things that make life livable, all of which my business permits me, against your farmer's cheaper outfit and lack of mental enjoyments and long days and staying at home and lots of other things that do not add pleas-

ure to life, all of which the farmer's income freely permits him. Oh, why, why, should I have married a farmer?

"Because you couldn't find anybody but me, idiotic enough to marry you," rudely broke in Mariah, who unbeknown to me had been listening and before I could utter a word in defense of myself, she gave vent to such a tirade of—well, purely as a matter of humor, I reproduce it. She said I had been furnishing money to boom anything and everything on the known globe, with the exception of New England, which was one reason for the idle farms and undeveloped natural resources of home. With the capital had gone an army of the youth, the backbone of any place, and with the boys had gone a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, all of which had, of course, depreciated just so much the confidence in home matters. New England, with the developments money might make, was just as capable of supporting several million more people, as the present population. My insane grasping after money had arranged the farms in many sections so that one couldn't make a visit to his nearest neighbor and get home in time to attend his own funeral. The

" Why didn't I get up a boom? "

tendency of the human soul was to be where there was something going on. The fact that farmers were so widely separated, in some localities, had contributed not a little to that discontentment which had driven so many boys and girls from the farm. It wasn't so much that farm work was disagreeable, or ill paid, as the desolation that surrounded everything. When held right to it there was but little of the Robinson Crusoe spirit in the average soul.

Why didn't I get up a boom at home?

There were number one opportunities in every country town in New England for safe and profitable investments, either in mining or manufacture or agriculture. She wanted me to make lots of noise about it, too, and every few minutes to send up and out genuine, wild western, blizzardy whoops for the resources of home. I ought to develop the undeveloped; divide up the farms; make ten homes where there is now one; then would a great amount of this disposition in our youth to go away off somewhere be done away with.

The average farmer was just as rich and just as great as the average citizen in other callings, and what I had said on that point was

a mis-statement and she believed that into country people's lives, as into all other lives, there meandered just so much (about half and half) of sugar and vinegar, and it was one of the unsolved mysteries, why, when there were millions of God's good acres uncultivated and unoccupied, on this little earth of ours to-day, whereon, by honest labor mixed with a brain or two, an independent and comfortable living could be obtained, that millions of the human family should swelter in all the impurities that poverty compels in overcrowded cities. Millions of our fellow creatures do not from birth to death breathe one breath of pure air or drink one swallow of actual water, or even get one good uninterrupted squint at the blue sky—and still the acres lie unimproved.

And if I wasn't so completely mashed with myself and my dollars, I would invest a few thousand dollars in removing the poor from the cities and establishing them in the country. In the immediate vicinity of each colony, I ought to endow a respectable sized cemetery, that lazy and vicious subjects might be buried with slight expense.

Mariah is done with the subject. What if

I should invest money as she suggested? Why, ten to one the other fellows would come prancing into heaven some fine morning with a better-filled pocketbook than my own, or what if death should come stamping up to my front door of a rainy evening and find I was a million or two dollars short? I dare not do it. The risk would be too great. It would be folly; besides, Mariah was only joking about the whole business, and before I got over laughing another Sabbath day had appeared.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

CHURCH

It is a Sabbath morning. The month of July always produces more or less of Sabbath mornings—a reflection which is offered purely for information. It may seem incredible, but the sun shines, the birds sing, the leaves are tittering in the breeze; in fact all nature is indulging in a good broad grin. Assuredly, it is a beautiful day, a sublime streak of weather.

The morning chores are done and Mariah and I are ready for church.

I should add to my previous list of chores, that on this particular morning I had to attend to Mariah's old lady turkey, who several weeks ago tore herself from those she loved (I am speaking of the turkey now), and in a secluded dell by the woods settled down and set on some eggs, only appearing in the wicked haunts of man for dinner and tea, until this morning, when she strode forth accompanied by seventeen young obble-wobble-gobbles, which, of course, necessitated quite a little

extra work on the part of Mariah, I performing the brain part arising therefrom.

On the subject of church-going, Mariah and I are a unit, the only question up to date that we have spontaneously agreed on. We think, but from somewhat different reasons, that it is a duty to be regular at church, though each of us is a member "in good and regular standing." Mariah looks upon it as a duty owed to this and seven or eight other worlds, but I confine my church affairs entirely to this world, with some select provisos thrown in.

What's the sense of trying to navigate the whole universe spiritually?

But Mariah is very peculiar. It's quite plausible that one with a less than medium-sized soul can keep that little soul in perfect repair and have time to spare in bolstering up other souls, as Mariah does, but a soul of length and breadth and huge dimensions generally, requires all one's energies to keep the thing in fairly presentable shape, even for earthly audiences to gaze into.

Simply because an animal has only two legs never was conclusive evidence to my mind that it had a soul. If it has one it is in countless

instances of such infinitesimal area as not to be worth the trouble of cultivation.

It seems to an unprejudiced observer that in all so-called civilized communities, and some pagan ones, a series of judiciously gotten up funerals arranged on an economical plan would be a decided help towards the millennium.

What about country people not going to church and being without churches in the country?

Simply this, as stated in the preceding chapter, the desire to do big things elsewhere and the unjust bonus capital has required have tended to deplete the population in many rural communities, so that it is a fact, in several country places in New England, the people are deprived of the benefits of regular religious services.

Now as to church attendance, country people are precisely the same in that respect as city people. Some go and some don't, and some believe this thing and some that just the same as other folks.

But this difference does exist between city and country church-going. The farmer has

labored hard, physically, through the week, and of a Sunday is physically tired, and to attend church is a physical effort because he is obliged to drive several miles, in many cases, and in uncertain weather, which adds to the labor and increases his weariness, whereas your city merchant has labored mentally and is brain weary Sunday morning, but to attend church he has to make but little physical effort and the church services give him an intellectual change and therefore a mental rest.

Again, your farmer may have been treated to a service that is tiresome both mentally and physically and return from church in a worse condition, spiritually, than when he went, but your merchant has had the benefit of a sermon intellectually strong, and great in eloquence and full of enthusiasm, so he comes home refreshed.

Strange, but a fact nevertheless, that a sermon that will produce a snore in a farmer will cause a cityite to stay away from church and vice versa. To be sort of confidential, I believe, in city or country, a bit of a change in the line of Sunday services would be beneficial. We have been firmly impressed with the fact

"Drive several miles in uncertain weather"

that we are born and sometime must die, and some other fixed truths, but is it awful wicked to suppose a church service could be an interesting entertainment, a pleasant recreation?

But as I was saying, when we arrived at the church about half of the male part of the congregation, as usual, were roosting in various attitudes on the church steps and in front, waiting for the last bell to call them in, also to glare and stare and mash and gossip, but by the exercise of dexterity and Mariah's elbow, we ran the gauntlet unscathed.

By the way, why is it, in city or country church, theater or dance hall, before and after service, the entrance thereto is always blocked with apparitions? There they stand, gazing with an intensity of "horrosity!" Shivering truly heroic; a perfect picture of an orang-outang eating peanuts; apparently impervious to cold, heat, rain or snow; always on deck; grand emblems of fool-in-the-head.

And for what?

The last bell rang. The choir launched out on the Doxology. Those who were serving the Lord outside entered now, and the congregation, with the exception of a few, the very

"About half of the male part of the congregation were roosting in various attitudes on the church steps."

élite of our society, were present. Those few never reached church only in season to receive the benediction, being of that superb mechanism as to require no more than that amount of spiritual food for the week. At least, I suppose that is the reason given by certain folks for tardiness at church. I know from positive experience, however, that these late comers are no end of annoyance, not only to the preachers and those who are paying attention to the services, but especially is it a matter of vexation to those weary souls who have sought the quiet of God's house for peaceful slumber.

There is no doubt in my mind but on this identical Sunday that which was destined to have been the supreme effort of Deacon Pelix's life, was rudely shattered, ruined beyond hope, by the untimely entrance of the Dane girls. He had just given birth to a snore, or rather the introductory strains of a snore which measured 178 seconds to its apex, and was striking in splendidly on the allegretto movement which leads down to the snapped-off collapse in the finale, when came the interruption.

Mariah said, in a kind of mad tone, that

measuring a snore was great business, anyhow, especially in church.

Besides criticising my church etiquette and paying strict attention to the services, Mariah can give a minute description of every polonaise, basque, skirt, dress, cloak, blouse and hair pin; all hoods, toques, hats, bonnets and laces; the length, breadth, width, hue, color, age, shade, and price of all ribbons; the number of each shirr, yoke, tuck, bias, hem, binding, pleat and gore; feathers, furbelows, and numerous other arrangements, whose technical names I do not recall at the present moment. I do not mention this in a boastful spirit, just because Mariah is so fortunate as to be a wife of mine, or because I think her mind above the average female mind, but as showing the vast intricacy of woman's brain; the ability to concentrate on various and widely different subjects at the same instant.

But whether considered from the snoring standpoint or in the light of the above enumerated togglery, the most of us have some side entertainment to be used during church service.

It must be extremely discouraging for a

minister of the Gospel to talk to beings who, apparently, are incapable of making any personal application of divine teachings.

That inspiration was suggested to me several years ago, but I never was vividly impressed with its importance until to-day. Rev. Pax was telling of a marvelous city, having "three gates on either side," and as the beauties of that wonderful place were described I recalled a number of my fellow citizens who would be entirely out of place amidst such gorgeous environments. I even felt injured for, as the sermon proceeded, the parson was actually making room for all the human family in that magnificent city. He has turned the last leaf of his manuscript and is well down on the page. No distinction yet. The whole crowd, my enemies included, are almost on the golden streets.

Can the man be insane?

The Bible is closed, the sermon laid aside. Rev. Pax advances to one side of the pulpit, pauses an instant, and repeats solemnly, "And nothing that maketh a lie or worketh an abomination shall enter therein."

Good! That shuts the gates solidly against several I know of.

Liars that any locality might look up to in pride, and as for abominations, they were distinguished artists in that line. Thomas Plug, Franklin J. Saphead and Pumpkin R. Squash were the ones I had especial reference to.

Could it be possible those men were so hardened in depravity as not to realize their situation? I gave each a searching glance with sort of a sorrowful smile attached to the end of it for appearances, and if you will believe it, I caught those three hypocrites staring straight at me with all the might of their respective eyes, and each feature was radiant with ghastly grins, saying plainer than words could express it, " that fixes him."

Just why people should entertain any such ideas of myself is unaccountable. My life, so far as any outward evidence shows, is within one or two shades of perfection. I have always been extremely cautious in committing sin to have it invisible to the world. If there is anything that is nauseous to my sensitive nature it is the absurd way some folks have of deviating from perpendicular rectitudes. Can't even perform the rudiments of sin without making public exhibitions of themselves.

Sickening!

When we were going home from church I tried to impress upon Mariah the awful wickedness of doing wrong and being found out in it. I related to her my observations of the day. The unparalleled conceit of those men. My sympathy with the Rev. Pax. How I had wrenched my brain in inventing conditions that would allow my errors to fall naturally onto somebody else. I told her of the many times I had denied myself the simple luxury of profanity and fabrication for the reason I could not see my way clear for holding her or someone else responsible for the act. And as to the classics in sin, why, I frequently devoted months of study to a single crime, before the situation appeared safe for operation. "In bringing about that scandal you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" said Mariah warmly.

Just so sure as I become eloquent on a subject and have reached the climax in description or argument, equally certain is Mariah to interrupt me. And I have noticed with pain, of late, she prefaces her talk with some slurring allusion to myself. However, she is under headway now and running like a clock without

a pendulum, and I am powerless to do more than give the gist of her lunatic utterances: Couldn't I see there was nothing in the world half as wicked as to do the way I said? Pretending to be so awful good and all the time working up some meanness that other folks had got to account for. It was just such creatures as I was that caused people of the world to talk so about the church and church members. She didn't blame Tim Tank, mean as he was, for saying that if I got within sight of heaven he should get to the gates and inside without the least bit of trouble. I wasn't so cunning by considerable as I thought I was. Lots of those smart games I had chuckled over, folks knew a few days after who cut 'em up. If she couldn't belong to the church and do what she ought to she wouldn't belong at all. Why couldn't I be good for the sake of goodness and try and make the world better? Why couldn't I practice what I had publicly professed to believe?

And what I had said of church attendance was bordering on blasphemy. That people who couldn't go to church unless there was a three-ring circus attached to it, who went as a mere

matter of entertainment, were not Christians, only pretenders and an injury to the cause. People who had the love of God in their hearts; an earnest desire to worship; who were imbued with the spirit of true righteousness would go to church anywhere, and the going would be to them an affair of pleasure, something to be looked forward to with sincere joy. Those were problems of the heart, not of the brain. And if certain localities were without religious services it was the fault of the people themselves in those places. It was because the people hadn't interest enough in the matter to attend a religious meeting, much less to support a church.

She'd like to see the place, where the love and fear of God prevailed to any extent, that there wasn't a thriving church.

And this idea I had of manufacturing a new god to fit every new emergency made her shudder, it was——

How much longer Providence would have allowed such cruelty practiced on me without interference I do not know had not Mariah at this instant discovered her calves (not including myself, there are five calves in

Mariah's herd) exploring the mysteries of Thomas Plug's cornfield. And without stopping to consider the best way of getting those calves into their own field, she bounded over the fence and I after her, which, of course, frightened the calves into running, and we ran after them, and this also increased their velocity. But why harrow peaceful minds in rehearsing the horrors of that race. It is sufficient to say that after one hour's time, in which we went through every boghole everywhere, in fact, within a radius of one mile, the calves through some strange miscalculation of locality, jumped into their own field. Mariah and I were completely exhausted spiritually, and pretty well used up physically.

Reader, did you ever experience the excruciating joy, the exhilarating pleasure, the soul-testing satisfaction of meandering at a 2:14 clip through green fields, over beautiful hills, down shady ravines and by the miry meadows in pursuit of wild calves?

If never, "ye know not what it is to live."

But I am nearly discouraged trying to elevate Mariah to the present era. She is a good eight centuries behind the times.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

RELIGION

REALLY there is not much difference in poor old humanity, cannibals, and Voltaires, and so on through the other forms of civilization. If differences do exist, it's in the conditions, not in the soul.

All are born without teeth.

All aspire, snicker, cry, die, and, usually, are fortunate enough to be buried. All are impelled by the same principle. All are scrambling, trampling the weak into dust, and raising thunder generally, in a maniacal haste to get there first.

Get where?

I don't know. But we all keep scratching and clawing and digging and cleaving the sea, earth, and air for something.

I hear a clumsy tread! The house shakes! Mariah enters.

"Holy horrors!" she exclaims, and then inquiringly:

"Cannibals?"

That's what I said.

Mariah admits I am a fair type of civilization, neither the worst nor the best, yet as between a cannibal and myself she haughtily says the comparison would give a number of points in favor of the cannibal. That apparently is a compliment to somebody, but not for me, as her wild ravings tend to show. She said:

"The victim of the gentle man-eater didn't have to languish weary months in gloomy suspense as to his fate. No reprieves or bouquets to worry about. Sudden death embraced him; then the carvist; then the cook; then the gaudily attired waitresses; and last, but not least, the stomachs of the famished household. Thus did he escape, not only the agonies of a lingering death, but all the dismal processes of the grave."

I believe that woman has got the dyspepsia! But hear the rest of it and be your own judges.

The misery I had brought upon my victims! The hellish devices I had invented! I only, for the further purpose of my ambitions and gratifications, had spared their lives. Indeed, in their death would lie misfortune to me.

" King Cannibal "

Many a miserable wretch would have, if possible, torn himself from my clutch, and with unspeakable rapture allowed himself to become material for a cannibal pie, at the same time most fervently thanking the unseen powers that a life filled with all the sorrows and disappointments contained in the schedule should so suddenly and easily terminate.

What wrecks strewed my pathway to the heights! How many forlorn beings I had kicked aside in my insane climbing to be top of the heap! What despair in all forms had I not caused or seen, yet passed unheeded! Because, if I had stopped to solace and assist, the crowd would pass me beyond all hopes of regaining.

What was a human life, more or less, to me? I must hustle onward, ever hitherward. Still in the midst of all this magnificent self I found ample time to render thanks unto the good Lord that I was not like that floundering pirate yonder.

"Why, Mariah!" I observed, mentally.

All the shades of goodness, all the kinds of badness I had adopted as the changing circumstances of my life demanded. Nothing so

high, nothing so low but I availed myself of it, in the furtherance of my plans. Bob Voltaire, Bob Paine, Bob Ingersoll, and lots of other Bobbed off Bobs could do all that.

No wonder the Bobs bob right up in meeting, and say, "Look at the look of us! We'll smash your Bibles and invisible idols into flittereens and then euchre ye at your own game. See how pretty we are, and oh! so good, and not burdened with a religious strap of any description. Ye can't come any of your tricks of legerdemain on us."

It was I who had brought about this illogical condition of things. So stupid it couldn't even be worked into a first-class farce!

By a superhuman wobble of the tongue, I managed here to ejaculate the magical words, "It's half-past ten," which signifies in our empire that it is time to feed the hens. It produced the desired effect, for however great the theme we have under consideration, hens rank first in Mariah's mind. Her absence was a necessity to my recuperation and reflection. I was weary, and felt that I should not live always.

Great cucumber pods!

Was I the universe and all the collateral belonging thereto? Evidently, as all the meanness from the Christian era down to 3456, A.D., had been directly charged to my account.

Mariah's intellect is exceedingly lop-sided. She is unable to grasp all the sides and bearings of any question.

If all her statements were true, ought not I to receive credit for all the Crusades, the Martyrdoms, the butcheries that brought this people to their present enlightenment?

Who is it that has fought infidelity, liars, blasphemers, and every form of rot through all these centuries?

Who is it and what is it?

But all that belongs to the past, and it is because Mariah clings so perniciously to ancient affairs that our troubles over this question arose. When she is the brightest and clearest mentally, which is usually in the morning, I am unable to bring her nearer to the present than the middle of the 14th century.

Looking back over my life I can, in truth, say that I have manfully shouldered all burdens thrust upon me unless I could surreptitiously pile them onto someone else. That

"Should I don mourning"

is simply the spirit of true progress. Why trig the wheels of advancement?

Should I don mourning because the Tim Tank crowd persisted in stumbling over me into tropical countries?

Roast the idiots!

Was I to blame because other people couldn't keep their own dish right side up?

Did that woman expect I was going streaking through this world and into the next loaded down with knaves and imbeciles? Thus thoroughly did I revolve the problem, looking into it from every conceivable point of vision, weighing carefully all the merits and demerits, and I arrived at the unanimous verdict that as society was constituted just now I was manufactured expressly for my own benefit.

Mariah also arrived, and without invitation, resumed:

"Was Christ all or nothing?"

Which way would I prefer to have it?

"Our lives, what we actually did, not what we pretended to do, were the foundations on which rested the decisions of countless mortals in regard to those questions."

"Be cautious, the issues are great."

Then the meeting was again reopened, with special reference to my walks.

"Did Christ's life and teachings instruct me to close my sanctuaries and spend months of time and thousands of dollars striding over deserts under guidance of fascinating Bedouins, or peeking down old Pharaoh's mummified throat, or basking in ease and idleness by the shining waters of Lake Como, that I might the more intelligently preach the Gospel to that poor man who hadn't eaten one square meal of victuals for six weeks? Was it Christ that taught me to heal the sick and then with a bowie knife to demand their life or their money?"

Was it Christ or the Sultan of Turkey or some other progressive gentleman that originated bigamy and all other igamies and ogomies?

Did Christ or the Bobs first introduce the idea of purity of thought and charity towards all?

Was it Christ or some railroad king that said the earth rightfully belonged to the man who had brains enough to get it?

Was it faith in Christ or the brilliant ora-

" Sultan of Turkey "

tions of Robert G. Ingersoll that had caused millions of souls to go down to the dark river of death in smiling expectancy, the gloom dispelled?

When we (tramps and every form of corruption included in this) literally follow the injunction, " Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you "—obey it to the full extent of its meaning—then plenty would be where poverty now is; then would joy take the place of sorrow; then would God's beautiful world be to all beautiful in fact. But she could do nothing when there were so many creatures like myself, knowing, caring, or feeling only for themselves.

Curious Mariah, that!

"First Chief in our football team"

feared his head would literally burst from brain pressure.

By sheer mental effort, and his boot-heels, he has arisen to be the first chief in our football team. Our social position may have been a slight advantage to him, but he is entitled to the most of the credit.

And so fond of study! Why, last week Dick and his warriors played a matched game of football with the Squashly fellows, and he returned with two of their bleeding scalps dangling from his belt, much to the pride of his mother and myself.

He would have brought the bodies, too, but the parents thereof, with much tearful pleading, prevailed upon him to let the remains remain.

But it is needless to enumerate more of his many startling intellectual feats. There has been no doubt in my mind for years that, could I give the boy the benefit of a baseball-college education, he would eventually make a big scratch on this era.

Money was an actual necessity in carrying through a project of that kind. Tomahawks, oars, boots, etc., are expensive, and my pride

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

EDUCATION

OUR eldest son, Richard by name, but known only as Dick, has attained unto the venerable age of fifteen years. Already he has evinced a marked tendency for avoiding labor. Yet Dick is decidedly brainy. He can jump 87 feet high, turn a triple somer-some-thing while descending, and land either end up.

His intellect is really marvelous, and as to running—why, when he was only four years of age, Mariah couldn't keep within speaking distance of him if she happened to be flourishing a birch stick at the time. By hard study and close application, his running is now astonishing.

The profundity enclosed in that boy's head has been the source of a vast amount of worry to me.

His throwing of an iron ball meets with deafening applause everywhere, so that I have

would not permit me to send a boy to school unless he was fully equipped for the most advanced studies. But Mariah keeps the money! If she took kindly to the idea of sending Dick to college, all would be well. If otherwise, the dazzling aspirations of an ambitious son and the fond dreams of an indulgent father must tumble to the earth, Lucifer fashion.

I wish here to digress briefly for the purpose of adding emphasis to the outrageous blunder of my life, namely—allowing myself to be bound in wedlock before I had secured a perfect legal title and right to all of Mariah's property. In those bright, cooing days of courtship, had I been possessed of sufficient foresight to have manfully said, "Mariah, I cannot trust my life in your keeping until after all your valuables are made over to me," she would have given them without hesitation rather than to have lost a bud of such promise. But I didn't give vent to any ideas of that nature until the designing creature had me yoked up tight and fast in matrimony, and then not a shred of a cent in my own name could or did I get.

For this egregious omission not only I, but posterity, must suffer.

Young man, standing on the yawning brink of matrimony, gather wisdom from my folly; profit by my mistake before it is too late!

And my worst fears were fully realized in the matter of Dick's college project, for no sooner had I broached the subject of properly educating Dick, than Mariah proceeded to deluge me with insanity of the rankest description. Indeed, I think this is the most severe attack she has had.

"Education!" she said. She thought it was about time somebody was educated up to work. There wasn't an American boy or girl in the country that one could get to work in the house or on the farm.

"Why?" she said. "Because the children have been too long taught, by fond parents and tender teachers, how much they resemble Daniel Webster, and how, if they study real hard, sometime they will become great like Webster."

"The peculiarities of Webster's head gearing have been kept a profound secret from the little fellows."

"Webster had brains, which is a mighty factor in the circus called life. However, by the above process, all the boys and girls are hustling up the ladder of wealth and fame in cities and villages. A cursed delusion that is filling the world with professional men and women of the fourteenth class, by simply discouraging the humbler callings of life."

"When folks settle down and do what God intended them to do, instead of trying all the time to crawl in where they don't belong, then I shall have some faith in the present system of education; but what is the sense of trying to make a great something out of an average-sized nothing." (I was glad that Dick was not present.) "Then there is the cost of books and——"

"Books!" I ejaculated.

"Yes, books," she shortly answered.

I am unable to say what Mariah meant by books, but quite likely she thinks books are used in modern schools, she is so densely ignorant! Be that as it may, if books were a necessity in receiving a college education, an additional obstacle had been rudely cast into Dick's path of glory.

Did that woman expect a boy of Dick's scholarly attainments to be dawdling around amongst books?

It must be one of Mariah's profound jokes.

But this much I gained by the interruption. No further allusion was made to books, for either through a slip of memory or a purposely changed course of reasoning, Mariah continued in this strain:

Life was too short for an individual to attempt to know everything, even if that person was mentally equal to it. Then why couldn't people be educated with some reference to their work in life, and why couldn't that work in life, in each individual case, bear some resemblance to the natural qualifications of the youth? Thousands of young people were turned loose in this country every year with heads filled up with Greek roots, Hebrew rot, and lots of other decomposed stuff that has about the relation to an earthly existence that eating rattlesnakes has to writing a first-class poem.

Not five per cent. of this highly educated army had the remotest idea of the requirements of actual life; did not know that the

average life was composed entirely of the simple ingredients, bread, butter, and molasses, in the securing of which something had got to be done by somebody. That something and those somebodies in the majority of instances must be small work in small spheres. A small per cent. of these college-bred people arose above the ordinary in this world's affairs. They couldn't! Why? Because they had only ordinary mental endowments, and if they had a part of a brain, more or less, the positions of greatness are not sufficiently numerous to accommodate them. The supply, such as it is, exceeds the demand. It was better to be a fair to medium bottom of something than a useless idiot halfway between heaven and earth. And so the deluded creatures are ground out year after year, in increasing numbers, filled up to overflowing with that beautiful but abominable theory that a person has only to squat down in the current of human events and sweetly wait until his education boosts him into fame. Too cultured to hoe potatoes or wield a dishcloth or play on an anvil, and not enough brains to get where they think they belong, and consequently doing nothing

"Too Cultured to wield a dish cloth"

through their earthly existence but dreaming, and cursing an unappreciative world.

When will Mariah cease her mad ravings?

And yet the youth are not responsible for this state of things. These malicious effects were produced wholly by unwise parents and ambitious teachers, in advocating such fabrications as this, "That one becomes whatsoever he wills," and the like, which are much worse than a lie.

Many lives could testify that, owing to just that kind of bosh being firmly impressed upon their youthful minds, their lives have been a comparative failure—lured to unhappiness by attempting to do that for which they have no special aptitude.

Fighting against nature and producing doctors, ministers, musicians, lawyers, etc., that worked more positive injury to their respective professions than their emaciated frames—including head—were worth.

All the schools in Christendom couldn't make a small man out of Abraham Lincoln, neither could the aforesaid schools make a Lincoln out of a piece of common clay.

"But, Mariah, shouldn't young people

aspire?" I asked. "Of course they should aspire; but let those aspirations be in the line of common sense. What reason is there in compelling a no-legged boy to become a tight-rope performer, or driving a youth who couldn't distinguish the difference between a musical tone and a plain everyday extract of July thunder through all the humdrums of a musical education, or thinking a blood-curdling, hair-lifting orator could be manufactured out of mediocrity."

Such muck! Now, as to our Dick, she wanted him educated, most certainly she did; but she objected to having him educated out of what nature designed him to be. Didn't want him droning through life, doing nothing, because he couldn't do something big.

The accumulation of knowledge beyond the requirements of his position, as a recreation or as a matter of culture, were commendable so long as those studies coöperated with his work and elevated his vocation.

The time was coming when we shouldn't be present to fight Dick's battles for him. Then let us prepare him for that battle, which, if ordained by life's mysteries to be a small

one, shall be fought creditably, manfully, believing humbly that in God's great mechanism, the most insignificant pin plays equally as important a part as the massive shaft in the calculations of the All-wise Author.

Exit Mariah—having, as usual, evaded all points bearing any relation to the question.

Poor Dick!

How could a boy possessed of such a mother ever become President of these United States, or a Vanderbilt, or Queen of England?

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

PRAISE

I LOVE to be praised, not because I believe in applying that soothing slobber to other people, but because I think I am worthy of praise. Yet how many times has my aching soul been cruelly denied that solace.

In fact, in many instances, I have been literally obliged to ask people if they didn't consider me pretty, or graceful, or intellectual, or awful good, and generally far superior to anybody else they happened to be acquainted with, so reluctant is humanity to render unto Cæsar that calamity which justly belongs to me.

It's a magnificent plan, this asking of questions, when judiciously carried out! Of course the questions must be put in direct form, thus giving no chance for evasion in the answers. Very rarely do you meet with a person so rudely blunt as to answer "no" to the direct question, "Do you think I am pretty?"

Aside from Mariah, I have yet to find that person who says "no" to the inquiry, "Then you think I am very truthful, do you not?" But be very careful in wording the query or you will get an implied censure in place of the expected compliment.

Do I praise other people?

How you startled me! I didn't suppose there was anybody in the wide world, excepting Mariah, who could propound such an absurdity, but I find on looking around that she is busy with a consumptive lamb, and happily has not yet got on to my praise enterprise, so assuming that the question was put in all seriousness, I will answer it frankly, and in accordance with the spirit of modern progress: Yes, under certain conditions.

Let any and every piece of human endowed clay, despicable or otherwise, with whom I am acquainted, lie firmly clutched in the arms of cold death; dead beyond all hopes of resuscitation—so dead that there is not a shadow of doubt in my mind but there is going to be a real funeral—I readily discover sundry virtues possessed by that handful of dust, and I begin to cackle about and magnify upon those

virtues until really there is a smile on the face of the corpse.

That's the way I do it, and why? Because all that talk is harmless now—very much so. He is an angel now in another sphere of action, and can't avail himself of any of the points to gain ascendency over me. But don't be too hasty in your eulogies. He may possibly revive, in which case it would be very embarrassing to harmonize your previous and post-mortem remarks.

A sad experience taught me that.

Franklin P. Saphead was my enemy, openly declared, at every turn and corner of life—as I was his. I used to devote a certain portion of each day preparing mean things to say of him.

Well, he died—died suddenly. In fact dropped dead while at work. At any rate he was so sufficiently dead that his funeral obsequies were nearly finished, when, to the consternation of all, he stepped out of the casket, shook himself, and is a well man to-day, and solely on the strength of the good things I said of Mr. Saphead as a corpse, Mr. Saphead, as a living candidate for town office, won the

"Franklin P. Saphead was my enemy"

election over me. It was a dearly purchased lesson, but it has stayed by me.

Wait until after the burial before you pour out any praise, is the only absolutely safe rule. Or, better yet, wait until after the life insurance company admits he's dead.

And as to speaking in plauditory terms of a real live person, it's simply a piece of consummate idiocy, not worthy a moment's thought.

In the fresh simplicity of young manhood that knowledge was thrust upon me. No sense in assisting other people, by praise, into some position you are striving to get yourself. Frequently I have been able to knock down a fellow, by various ignorings of his attempts, in such a way that he has stayed knocked down and completely out of my path to earthly glory.

Of course there are creatures occasionally of such audacious makeup and so unrefined generally that they haven't sense enough to lie quietly after being poked over—up and at it again as if nothing unusual had happened. Regular beasts!

I can conceive of only one possible excuse

for speaking in praise of a living person, and that is of such a vapory nature that I blush in stating it, viz.: When I can tickle up somebody to do me a favor, some work or feat wherein it is a necessity for me to have outside assistance in the accomplishment of a scheme, I speak a few words of flattery, not praise. But even in this form, as in all matters pertaining to the subject, the utmost delicacy is required, because the almost daily changes in one's fortunes make it extremely hazardous to render unto others approbation.

To-day I may coddle a person to do me a favor, by bolstering him up in a position that by to-morrow I shall want myself; so considering the difficulties which surround the praise question, it is advisable to steer clear of the whole thing, unless one is very skillful.

"You villain!"

Mariah said that, and how it grieves me to confess that she now frequently refers to me by such terms of endearment. But she has me cornered and my system must again be saturated with ancient history. Says she:

"Don't you know that all really noble natures are ever ready, even anxious to give

praise to deeds of worth, and why shouldn't they be? When a man, woman, or child performs a commendable work or tries to do well, why not give them the encouragement of 'well done,' thus giving them renewed strength to fight greater battles? How many poor wretches have sunk down in despair, because their earlier attempts received no token of appreciation! Those attempts might have been, undoubtedly were, crude, yet bearing unmistakable evidence of honest, painstaking endeavor, still the courage to further struggle had been knocked down forever, because no cheering word had been spoken. Why not lift the clouds from a fellow-being's soul, and let in the healthful sunshine of kind words, loving sympathy? This hanging around graveyards, singing praises to deaf ears is too contemptible for expression—meanness personified."

It's an absolute impossibility for that woman to consider any question in the light of the 20th century, and as to praise, she will praise anything and everybody excepting myself. Why, this morning our horse, by a premature elevation of his hind feet, came within one-eighth of an inch of scattering my colossal

" Hanging around graves, singing praises "

brain over seven hemispheres, whereupon Mariah rushed up to him and began petting him, and telling him how noble, how intelligent he was!

Why is it that Mariah never agrees with me?

CHAPTER THE NINTH

TEMPERANCE

WITH the exception of eating and drinking, I am a strictly temperate man. The feverish excitements of the age in which we live produce no immoderation in my mode of living. Let the crowd hasten on, pushing and elbowing; what do I care?

We all eventually arrive at the cemetery.

But I do love to eat and I have a genuine affection for drinking, it is so pleasing—the sense of fullness.

I love rum for a variety of reasons, but probably the greatest satisfaction I derive therefrom arises from my intense patriotism, my loyalty, my earnest desire to keep this government on a solid financial basis.

As I have observed this nation marching gloriously into debt—a little deeper each year —I have made strenuous efforts to keep the whisky revenue up to former years.

In fact, so great is my love of country, that

to rum again—wholly for their precious sakes.

And then I have an abject horror of contagious diseases: to guard against them I always have a respectable sized prescription of alcohol ready to apply internally, should I spy any bacteria walking about, which I frequently do discover, and immediately insert into my being a liberal dose of the preventive (as a preventive it requires nearly double the quantity used in ordinary ailments, or in the same proportion as used in a first-class fishing excursion), which seems to arouse the envy of a very peculiar digestive apparatus attached to my stomach, so that I am compelled to take some stimulant, before and after eating. This I have noticed brings on a feeling of uneasiness, superinduced by overwork, which can only be relieved by swallowing lager beer, which again induces that headache, which I proceed to medicate for in the usual way, etc., etc.

When I began this chapter I honestly supposed I was what might be termed a very moderate drinker, but after telling candidly the only occasions, with the exception of when

" Compelled to take some stimulant "

to rum again—wholly for their precious sakes.

And then I have an abject horror of contagious diseases; to guard against them I always have a respectable sized prescription of alcohol ready to apply internally, should I spy any bacteria walking about, which I frequently do discover, and immediately insert into my being a liberal dose of the preventive (as a preventive it requires nearly double the quantity used in ordinary ailments, or in the same proportion as used in a first-class fishing excursion), which seems to arouse the envy of a very peculiar digestive apparatus attached to my stomach, so that I am compelled to take some stimulant, before and after eating. This I have noticed brings on a feeling of uneasiness, superinduced by overwork, which can only be relieved by swallowing lager beer, which again induces that headache, which I proceed to medicate for in the usual way, etc., etc.

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" Compelled to take some stimulant "

I am engaged in fishing or politics, in which I ever allow myself to indulge in intoxicating drinks, I must, in justice to myself, add that I am a temperance man, having learned by this means that I use it only in case of sickness.

Speaking with respect to strict accuracy, I should not probably be classed a total abstainer, yet, nevertheless, as a man pretty strongly mixed up in temperance work.

No one can hold the drinking habit more in abhorrence than myself when it is entered into by people of good health merely for amusement.

Guzzling the stuff night and day, and thereby surrounding themselves and families with all the squalor and desolation contained in the list, and doing nine-tenths of the crimes and gathering unto their estates all the poverty not previously engaged—sort of Tim Tank style.

Why, that man has reached such a stage of degradation that he hasn't any sense of pride left; so low that he won't even chew cubebs or cardamon seeds to purify his breath.

That condition of things, of course, has no application to you and me, because we are in-

"Last winter a horrible cold was suddenly thrust upon me."

valids, and moreover Mariah refuses point blank to have her property turned down any man's throat—indeed I have several times been compelled to get into debt for rum to protect my health and shield my family from contagious sickness, which, I regret to say, like many other duties I have performed solely for the benefit of others, has received no appreciation from her who solemnly promised to cherish me through all kinds of weather, until my noble heart should cease to wobble.

But she is coming. Reader, accept in advance my sympathy for what we shall be obliged to bear from that woman on this subject. She is a professional crank along all lines, but on temperance words fail me!

However, while Mariah is working herself up to the proper oratorical pitch (it usually takes her from three to five minutes) I will relate an incident which illustrates, though feebly, her ideas.

Last winter a horrible cold was suddenly thrust upon me. So suddenly and violently was I taken that I dare not go to my medicine case, which, for convenience, I kept in the barn. Mariah admitted that my condition was

such that I required a little alcohol in some form.

Well, she had a spoonful of brandy hid about the house, to be used in cases of necessity, which she at once produced, and I lolled back in the chair, supposing, of course, that she would lovingly hold my hands and gaze angel-like into my eyes while I drained the contents of the bottle. As this cosy picture floated before my mind's eye I believe I never felt such adoration for Mariah. Was ever man before blessed with such implicit wifely confidence?

That was all a dream, pleasant but deceitful.

What actually occurred was this: She poured out of the bottle one drop—I counted it—into a quart dish half filled with water, and after stirring the mixture well, she poured two drops—I counted them also,—of the brandy and water on to a lump of loaf sugar, and told me to take a small nibble of the sugar once an hour, or oftener, if I really thought it necessary.

But hear her:

"God pity me, and every woman who has a husband like mine. A husband who deliber-

many times I have filled my stomach so full of alcohol that it literally overflowed, purely —try to believe this statement—for the purpose of enriching the national treasury. If it wasn't for that I should never touch the stuff, only as I am obliged to swill down a few glasses of wine, to show my respect to high society, and then just enough to give a sparkling luster to my eye and tinge my imagination with brilliancy and convince the boys that I belong to modern progression. But generally those times are followed by a morning headache, which sadly interferes with my doing an honest citizen's duty with scythe or pitchfork, so that to relieve the pain and not lose any time in the work the Lord has appointed me to do, I take a good stiff drink of unreduced whisky. This, in its tussle with the headache, so wrenches my organism that I am obliged to take a couple of drinks more to help my system recover from the shock incurred by curing my pain, which many times produces a chill that may lead down to consumption or pneumonia and death. And the thought of my wife and children left without the protection of my mighty arm drives me

to rum again—wholly for their precious sakes.

And then I have an abject horror of contagious diseases; to guard against them I always have a respectable sized prescription of alcohol ready to apply internally, should I spy any bacteria walking about, which I frequently do discover, and immediately insert into my being a liberal dose of the preventive (as a preventive it requires nearly double the quantity used in ordinary ailments, or in the same proportion as used in a first-class fishing excursion), which seems to arouse the envy of a very peculiar digestive apparatus attached to my stomach, so that I am compelled to take some stimulant, before and after eating. This I have noticed brings on a feeling of uneasiness, superinduced by overwork, which can only be relieved by swallowing lager beer, which again induces that headache, which I proceed to medicate for in the usual way, etc., etc.

When I began this chapter I honestly supposed I was what might be termed a very moderate drinker, but after telling candidly the only occasions, with the exception of when

" Compelled to take some stimulant "

" Orators or clowns "

conditions. There was no chance, no occasion for the expansion of that soul.

By the way, this business of contraction or expansion of souls is whose fault—yours or mine? Am I to be censured for going into raptures over what would be perfect torture to you, and vice versa?

But, as I was saying, the human race hankers after some kind of a circus, and it has been scientifically demonstrated that country people are a species of the human family; that they are just as good, just as bad, just as great, that is, in proportion to their numbers and opportunities. That they dance and pray and murder and go to prison and Congress the same as other folks, and have the same desires for entertainment.

They of the cities can buy their shows, or rather the forms of amusement are everywhere at hand, costing only the price of admission, whereas they of the country must manufacture their shows—in fact must be the show itself. So it comes about that in the country there are church sociables, drunks, parties, theatricals, etc., composed entirely of "home talent." No foreign "stars" to dazzle and confuse the

audience. Occasionally the monotony is varied by the appearance of strolling minstrel troupes, or the like, and it is the advertised appearance of a city theatrical party in our village tomorrow night that has wrought Mariah all up again to say more of those awful things to me. Would you suppose she could, after all that you know I have been obliged to endure from her?

Mariah could, and she did, but in justice to her I wish to state that I do not think her love of controversy, her desire to argue with me was the primitive motive in the present upheaval, but owing chiefly to what has been previously intimated, her insane persistency in clinging to old customs, determined to waddle along in the old ruts, would not accept of advanced thought.

Now in the case of this theater company, Mariah positively refused to attend with me for the very silly reason that it was a variety show, composed principally of sky-stepping females. Such shows might furnish entertainment, but were not instructive; contained nothing suggestive for afterthought; no food for intellectual reflection.

Poor, deceived woman! That vaudeville performance, if as advertised, was to be brimful and overflowing with charming suggestions.

I resolved to make one more effort to get Mariah to attend; to lift her into modern channels, and that I might place the matter before her eyes in a more eloquent light I went to the village for the purpose of studying the playbills and billboards. The billboard in our place is the broadside of a fifty-foot barn which stands exactly opposite the meeting-house sheds. One standing in the rear of those sheds and gazing through the cracks between boards has an excellent opportunity of observing the billboards without being himself observed. As soon as I could do so, without being noticed, I went behind the sheds. Not but what I would just as soon have stood directly in front of the barn, only by so doing I exposed myself to all kinds of interruption, which, of course, prevented concentration of thought and the comprehension of details. A great issue was at stake, and I was using every means to win.

As I suddenly dodged behind the shed, im-

agine my consternation on finding Thomas Plug there also, comfortably seated and glaring with all his eyes right out through the very best crack in the whole shed towards the barn. I asked him if he had lost anything. He said he hadn't, was simply trying to figure out what Tim Tank was up to out there in front of those pictures. I said I'd help figure out that problem if I could find a respectable crack to figure from, which I, with the aid of my knife, succeeded in finding. It was a very inferior crack in comparison to the one occupied by Mr. Plug, but it was better than none. Sure enough, there on an old barrel, not ten feet from the billboards, in plain sight of all, sat Tim Tank, lost in admiration of the gorgeously painted scenes before him. I said such unfettered liberty as Tim Tank availed himself of was really shocking.

"Disgusting," whispered Plug, and continued, "he's been there for more than two hours, because he was there before you came here."

But there he continued to sit, as happy, apparently, as some people in a prayer-meeting, staring at those illustrated girls. Daintily at-

"It was a very inferior crack in comparison to the one occupied by Mr. Plug."

tired girls, if the illustrations were at all true to life. Girls who by some curious negligence had forgotten to don their winter clothing; also had omitted their summer suits, and probably thinking bloomers immodest, had decided to wear nothing but a thing fastened about the hips that resembled a Japanese parasol in a simoon. Such superb limbs, and graceful bodies, and so fascinating generally!

One entrancing creature—she was called on the bills the "Queen of all High Dancers" —was portrayed as bestowing a ravishing smile upon an enthralled audience. While one foot rested on the top of her head, with the other she was making supremely graceful stabs at the moon. There the bewitching damsel posed, pioneer of striding civilization in our benighted region.

Plug and I had practically agreed that Tim Tank was a bad, low man, when my friend, Mr. Saphead, prematurely shot around the corner into our midst. He seemed to be surprised, but finally said he came back of the shed to watch Tim Tank look at the barn. I loaned him my knife to fix up the proper size of a crack to look through. At the present

rate of increase it was only a question of a little time before there wouldn't be enough cracks in the old shed to accommodate those respectable citizens who wished to gaze on Tim Tank, so I went home to try and impress the incorrigible Mariah that it was a duty she owed to me, to her children, to those gayety girls, who were so nobly struggling to enlighten the world, to attend the theater in company with her family. I discoursed as well as I knew on the sublimity of the performance; its stimulating influence on the youth; its far-reaching suggestiveness. I told her the day of heavy dramatic work was passing away to make room for a higher order of things, and it was our duty to strive and keep pace with the procession. I assured her most solemnly that if she would go to that show with me I would keep a careful lookout and if there were to be any scene enacted which might cause embarrassment to her backward nature, I would give warning in season that she might cover her face with her hands and she could peek out at the artists from between her fingers. By so doing she could gauge her observations to the amount she could digest. Gradually the

space between the fingers could be widened and the dose increased.

By an extremely agile movement on my part the water pitcher hit the cellar door instead of my head, and before I could pick up the broken pieces (of pitcher) Mariah was raving like a maniac——!

Did I suppose she, a wife and mother, would be seen at an entertainment of a questionable order—at any place where she couldn't, with pride, be accompanied by her son and daughter? To think the children had a father capable of suggesting such a thing and of wanting to go himself!

The entertainments indulged in, the books read, the recreations we permitted ourselves to enjoy, whether of the intellectual or animal order, became part and parcel of our nature. It was through the mind results were obtained. Should that mind be fed on sensualities or nourished by a quality of food that caused it to strive for greater attainments, to expand? Did the portrayal of smut by books, theaters, or society, purely for the sake of the smut, make better, greater manhood or lovelier womanhood? Did the breeding of intemper-

"Hit the cellar door"

ance and vice add beauty or elevation to beings whom God created in his own image?

An entertainment might be amusing or instructive, or vulgar, or a combination of the three things, and set before the public for any or all of those purposes. Which should it be?

Whatever the public demanded, the public got. If it demands a book or a drama filled with indelicate hints, reeking with all the vileness of human nature and atmospheres surging with legs, for no reason but to exhibit legs and the low contortions of thought, it got its desire. If it wanted plays, etc., depicting in strong light the woes and glories of life's mysteries, using the unfortunate shadows thereof, only as a beacon to warn other travelers, it got that also.

Who and what is the public?

She and I were a small portion of it, and the sanction of our presence, our patronage of whatever was high or low, gave just so much encouragement for the continuance of one or the other, good or bad.

Why, of course people must have variety, and with all the innocent forms of amusement, the health-giving sports, the great intel-

lectual treats afforded by literature, drama, music, art—certainly a rich variety—all within the grasp of those disposed to participate.

Every heart manufactured its own idol. Should that idol be made of dirt or diamond?

Madness!

I am not quite certain that *madness* is the proper ejaculation to use here, for as soon as Mariah cooled down sufficiently, so that I considered there was no danger of her making further physical assaults on me, I went to sleep, and consequently lost a considerable portion of her exhortation. When I awoke she was gone. However, as the word *madness* can be appropriately applied to most of her sayings, I am going to chance it here, trusting that it fits exactly. Madness!

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

WRECKS

In confidence I am going to tell you something. Don't lisp a word of it to anybody else, even if they do promise never to tell it, because the secret I am giving you, if rightly used and kept strictly in your charitable bosom, will increase your happiness tenfold; but once the recipe becomes generally known, its charm is lost forever.

There is nothing in this wide world causes my angelic heart to thump with such unalloyed satisfaction as the misfortunes of other people—preferably my acquaintances.

The proportion of enjoyment I derive from other's troubles depends on the size of the calamity and how well I know the party afflicted.

For instance, if a person whom I have known for years runs against snags that just about ruin his earthly prospects, or at least knocks him out of the race for some time—

when a case of that kind comes to my notice every pore of my magnificent being thrills with delight. Fact is, I am never real happy—never experience that peace which comes only from perfect contentment—unless there is somebody in my immediate vicinity in some kind of trouble. Troubles of a physical nature or honest financial failures, and the like, of course, furnish me a mild form of happiness, but when the troubles arise which are destined under my careful treatment and aid to ruin somebody's character, then do I become ecstatic.

When I learned that friend Saphead was accused of crookedness in a money deal, and rumor said there was going to be a wedding up at Pelix's in which the sheriff was to act as groomsman, and that Thomas Plug's oldest son was becoming intemperate, a delicate feast was spread for my epicurean fancies.

And right here lies much of the beauty and power of the secret I am revealing to you, and the results depend largely on whether you manage now with tact or otherwise. Imitate my example in that respect. The first thing I do after hearing news of the above nature is

to go to the barn or some secluded place and lie down and laugh and roll over and yell and hurrah and te-he until my feelings of hilarity are so far spent that I have myself under perfect control, and I briefly thank the Lord for creating me so honest, so pure, and good, and then I am in condition to appear before the world.

I then put on my very longest face—a face with several inches more of latitude than the one I use at funerals—and go out among my fellow-citizens and hark for information. It is a much better way to let your neighbor begin the talk, because that gives you such a chance to add helpful thought, seemingly innocent remarks, to the scandal. As for instance, when the Saphead money transaction is mentioned to me I roll back my eyes and say, "I can't hardly—I don't want to—it's really a great strain on my credulity to believe it of him, and yet it may be so, because I knew of some things in connection with Mr. Saphead that were rather peculiar," etc.

You want to have a very liberal supply of evidence and conjecture, either real or imagined, ready to substantiate the original yarn,

" And yet it may be so "

and which will also make generous additions to the story. Of course, I utter all of these extras in the "I understood," or "so-and-so said" kind of way, which not only makes what I say more effective, but extends the impression that the news is breaking my heart, still all the time I am tickled as tickled can be—internally.

That rule will apply in a case like the Pelix wedding, only that needs a little more acting. Let me rehearse it with you: You are supposed to have been through all the preliminary steps and are ready to begin at the critical point I tell you of the Pelix's. No, no, don't snicker right out. I thought you said you were all ready to begin. Can't you see by that snickering you are ridiculing the scandal—will kill it altogether if you don't conduct yourself more artfully. There, that's better. In cases of this description, you must, if possible, roll your eyes entirely out of your head at this point. Pause a full minute, then exclaim in agonized tones, "w-wh-why-e-ee-e!" Pause again, and give the heavens a crack-splitting gaze of sadness and then gasp, "how could she?" Another pause, in which our deep

emotions are becoming calm, recovering from the terrible shock, and we talk the matter over in a spirit of candor. I make a suggestion which at once reminds you of seeing a certain Miss lurking around a certain place when it was almost sundown. That was several months ago, and you didn't think anything of it at the time—of course you didn't, you darling old lump of innocence, but now, in the light of these awful developments what you saw is a shining circumstance—is the conclusive bit of evidence required in the glorious (?) affair.

That's right. You are catching hold of the idea beautifully, only you must practice the art of magnifying—brighten up the powers of originality a little. I never allow a story detrimental to anyone's character or prospects along any line to leave me as I heard it. I look it over carefully, study it from all its various bearings and tack on a little slur here, enlarge the injurious points there, by several diameters; at other points embellish the thing with plausible insinuations, (lies, Mariah calls them), and put the yarn again into circulation.

In seasons when there is nothing special

"How could she"

going by the way of gossip or slander or scandal, I have gratuitously furnished time and thought in ascertaining the weak points of certain people morally, or financially, or politically, and from the slimmest foundations of fact, constructed and made public incidents which well-nigh ruined the parties involved, and afforded the community elegant topics for conversation.

It's a delightful pastime, that, but like all the fine arts, it requires culture to be successfully followed—cunning.

But how do I manage to get all these things into general circulation, without implicating myself? That is a very important point, yet one easy of performance. I always act under the head of anonymous. That is, after mapping out in my mind every detail of the slander that I wish to put before the public, I tell you that Anonymous two told me that Anonymous one told him that there was terrible doings over yonder, and Anonymous one didn't want the aforesaid news to become general gossip, so after administering a blood-curdling oath to Anonymous two to never, never tell it, Anonymous one tells Anonymous two and

Anonymous two makes me take the oath of eternal secrecy, and tells me the horrible stuff, and I tell it to you just as soon as Anonymous two is out of hearing, with the solemn injunction that you must never tell it to anybody else; but if you do tell it to others—of course you won't tell it—tell it as big as it is, and tell whoever you tell that they mustn't tell it, but if they must tell it, tell it large to those they tell, and tell them to tell it to those that they tell that they are in honor bound not to tell a word of it.

Shameful how some folks will abuse a confidence of this kind!

You fail to see the object of all this! After these vivid explanations you see no purpose?

Your simplicity reminds me of Mariah!

Wrecks! The creation of human wrecks is the plainly visible purpose! Take away the human wrecks that are scattered all along life's course and you take away much of the pleasure of your life and mine, because there is nothing that supplies the self-satisfying consolation as supplied by other people's troubles. See them all around, everywhere, writhing under this burden and going down

under that load—sinking never to rise! The high inspirations brought to the surface by a human wreck! You and I marching along so erect, so good, so smart, keeping clear from all perplexities, all wiles!

Not only is this struggling mass of wreckage a source of perpetual delight to you and I, but it also serves as a danger signal. Warns us of the bog-holes, the sunken reefs, and thereby we dodge many of the snares lying in the course. But the number of human wrecks would greatly diminish if it were not for our unceasing vigilance—possibly cease to exist—and then our leading amusement would be gone, and the compass which has steered the craft, worthless. In such an event you and I might become wrecks, because there was nothing to guide us.

So you will perceive, that as a matter of personal safety, it behooves us to be ever alert; to labor with increased vigor. We can't reasonably expect the Lord is going to do all of this alone. Certainly not. There is a great work for us to perform, so let us all work together—reduce this wreck-making business to a system, to the accuracy of a science. In

concert let us fabricate and gossip and slander and spy out and scandalize a fellow-being until he, from sheer disgust with the pictured enormity of his crimes, gives up the battle and becomes really bad.

It doesn't make any difference how the result is achieved—only by some, by all, or by any means, I want the fellow wrecked, and then mark the next victim and proceed as before, and so continue piling wreck upon wreck. It's a soul-tickling, body-nourishing, brain-enlarging, evil-preventing, joy-producing recreation to me, this manufacturing of wrecks!

"Buzzard!"

It is perhaps needless for me to announce that Mariah has the floor now, and has already made her introductory preface. She looks pale, livid, and is saying, in a disconnected, incoherent way, something about humanity and adversity, and me and snakes and brutes and people and downfalls, and me and scorpions and afflictions, and me and hyenas and folks and reverses, and me and hell-hags and loads and curses, and me and ghouls and visitations and clouds, and me and wireworms, etc. Nearly two pages of just such meaningless

stuff as that Mariah spoke, and then she groaned and said very distinctly, "Oh! how could I ever have married such a man!"

And I groaned, and my groan for stone-melting pathos, heartrending sorrow, and life-shortening propensities, was as much superior to Mariah's groan as the Rocky Mountains are ahead of a hole in the ground.

My groan said, "Oh! how could I ever have married such a woman!"

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

POLITICS

It may savor of conceit, but nevertheless I truly feel that there are concealed about my being all the qualifications necessary to the erection of a mammoth politician. Aye, that the making of a profound statesman even is wrapped up within me.

My winsome ways—"to know me is to love me"—my wonderful capacity for believing without argument everything everybody says before election; my ability to drink with the thirsty or choke to death with the dry, and leave each party with the impression that I am all solid on the different forms of temperance; my unswerving integrity in places where unsophisticated prevarications, coated over with wild fabrications, won't do better; my vast stock of all kinds of principles, and the tact to apply the correct principle at the right time and place; my unquestioned powers for grasping the money question—both the money and question—whether of gold or silver, or bills,

or precious stones, in unlimited quantities, are a few of the minor qualities possessed which entitle me to be ranked among the great politicians.

Now as to my claims for statesmanship, the schemes I have recently evolved and perfected, whereby town, state, and national life would receive tremendous impetus, are the grounds on which I justify my title to statesmanship.

I maintain that such legislation should be enacted as would enable us to hang more people. Sadly deficient in that respect are our laws. Thousands of our citizens have gone to their graves comparatively unknown, simply on account of the narrowness of existing laws. Thousands of these people—think of it—living and dying in obscurity, yet possessed of rare and tender talents! Talents that under laws of wide justice would have allowed the possessor thereof to have won lasting fame as the leading character on a well-constructed gallows. And not only fame have these uncomplaining heroes lost by being compelled to die a natural death, but volumes of sentiment and armfuls of bouquets these cruel laws have deprived them of as well.

After this waning hanging industry had been raised to the position its importance demands, and in successful operation three years, I would bring about such legislation as would create Uncle Sam owner of this land, bag and baggage, in reality as well as in name, and each individual to get his or her little plate of beans from Uncle Sam's own hand—the number of beans each was to receive depending entirely upon the benefits each had contributed towards the good of the whole. By this system our life, which is now composed of swine, murderers, thieves, and idiots, would gradually all turn to idiots—but happy and contented idiots we all should be.

As soon as these great plans were complete in my own mind, I at once set to work to get myself into a position where the nation might reap the benefits of my studies, and that is the sole reason for my so rashly thrusting my life into political waters. But being a wise statesman requires one shade of brain, and scooping in the necessary votes for an election to the office which makes a statesman wise or otherwise—mostly otherwise—demands a brain of all colors and adaptabilities.

My first step towards being elected a legislator was to worm myself into the good graces of Tim Tank, though Tim does not wield a mighty influence in the social and religious life in my district, yet as a political factor he is a power. Once I gained his hearty support I was sure of the support of all the dram-drinking voters, regardless of party, for Tim is their avowed leader. I arranged a fishing expedition to the river, to be composed entirely of rum and Tim and I. Tim was a little shy of me at first, naturally supposing I belonged to the temperance party, but as we fished and drank and drank and fished I unfolded to Tim the beauties of my projects once the office was mine. Before night I had convinced Tim that in less than one year from the time of my election pure whiskey would run in that river in the place of water, and everybody could drink free of charge, and he promised me the votes of himself and noble compatriots.

I had indeed won a great victory, but when returning home that night we met Thomas Plug, and he caused to be put into circulation that I had been fishing with Tim Tank and came home in a maudlin condition; which, of

"Fishing with Tim Tank"

course, created an uproar among my temperance supporters, and to pacify that element I conducted temperance meetings in several localities.

I told several people how I had been scandalized, what a stanch advocate, both by example and precept, I had always been of the holy cause of temperance; how if these nice people should deem it best to elect me to office, I should, as soon as consistent with the circumstances, cause all the intoxicants of whatever name in the United States to be destroyed by fire, and the makers and sellers thereof to be cast into the middle of the wild roaring sea.

My temperance speeches made a great hit. I had nearly regained all the ground lost in consequence of that malicious lie, when my character was assailed from another point.

It appeared in evidence that precisely one hour and thirty-six minutes after I passed Mrs. Plump's residence, she was seen peering out of a window, smiling expectantly in the direction I had gone, from which the story was manufactured and widely circulated that the aforesaid lady and myself were planning to elope, and from that the absurd inference was

"My temperance speeches made a great hit."

drawn that I was a bad lot anyhow, and to support me for office was to put a premium on immorality.

While I was proving to the public that, although I was a large man in every respect, my character towered majestically above all my other desirable qualities, a rumor was set in motion that I was the originator and founder of the A. P. A. order, which, to prevent its costing me the entire Roman vote, caused me to become immediately a member of the Catholic church.

This hasty and ill-advised action came near ruining my political prospects, for before I again entered the good graces of the A. P. A.'s I was obliged to unite with nine churches of different denominations and seven secret societies; but every time I joined a new church or society some other church or society was sure to be offended, yet I think I manipulated the religious and society votes with such skill that on the whole I was a gainer thereby.

It was also intimated that I was lazy and unscholarly, and, therefore, was not worthy of the people's suffrage. To countermand this vile insinuation during the remainder of the

campaign I carried in some conspicuous place when in agricultural communities a hoe, an ax, and a barn shovel, and I discoursed to them on tuberculosis in turnips, and the goneness of calves dieted on skimmed milk.

I told the farmers in glowing terms how they were the salt and sugar and saleratus and nobility of the earth, and if it hadn't been for the very deplorable circumstance of my being called to work great reformations, I should have certainly been a tiller of bull-thistles and hens. (Here I made some graceful flourishes with my farming implements.) I promised them, if elected, to introduce such legislation as would at the end of six months' time, under penalty of death, prohibit the making or selling, or causing to be manufactured or sold any and all buffalo flies, potato bugs, or grasshoppers. In the more cultured places might be seen protruding from my pockets copies of Milton's Poetical Works and a Sallustia Catilina et Jugurtha, and in my speeches I told this class that on their votes, on my election depended the propagation of —— "me-kingdom" for-a-book—and they believed it.

Meantime the illiterate voters had been in-

formed that I was opposed to free silver. As that class could neither read nor write, I was obliged to see each in person and tell them how grossly my money views had been misrepresented; how if they could stoop to honor me with their votes, in the very near future government teams loaded with silver dollars would pass that way daily, and every man, woman, and child could take out a ten-quart panful of dollars apiece each day; which statement was at once, by the intelligent voters, construed to illustrate my extreme ignorance on the money question.

In spite of all these things; in spite of the rum many estimable citizens had drunk at Mariah's and my expense; in the face of all the rich promises I had made of every form of beneficial legislation and valuable appointments; in view of the logical arguments I had given vent to, affecting all sides of all current questions; notwithstanding my magnetic capacity for straddling fences; in spite of my sublime purity of character and deep religious convictions, an adverse current was setting in against me, which, if nothing was done to stay or reverse, doomed my political aspirations.

" Government teams loaded with silver dollars "

The impression seemed to be gaining ground that I was a drunkard and a temperance fanatic, a religious crank and a howling infidel, a many-sided political monstrosity, in whose hands the country was destined to certain ruin.

For a man who had cast self wholly aside and recklessly flung himself upon the altar of liberty, a sacrifice for humanity, to first realize that his labors are not appreciated by that same humanity, is a saddening, maddening, body-tuckering, profanity-breeding, brain-clotting sensation to the victim.

In truth, I can say that, at this stage of the campaign I should have given up the fight if nothing but my personal interests had been concerned, but my devouring love for my constituency forced me to continue the struggle.

I went into council with Tim Tank, and after surveying the field with great care, we decided there were only two things more that could be done to aid in my election, and even then my success was doubtful, so abominably had I been lied about.

Our first plan was to send to a foreign

country and import a few hundred voters, but more careful consideration convinced us of the impracticability of that scheme, owing to the nearness of the election. It was found, on consulting the time-tables of ocean steamers, and making no allowance for accidents or delays, the foreigners would have but just one hour's time, from reaching port to the closing of the polls, to become naturalized, study our literature, art, and constitution, and learn how to make their mark on the ballot. Such undue haste was decidedly distasteful to my refined nature, so that scheme was abandoned.

The accomplishment of the other plan was more within our reach—more in accordance with my high ideals of political warfare. Tim agreed to arrange such a line of circumstances that several men who had been specially active against me should prematurely die. Their death in connection with some judicious hints made to other parties, we thought, would greatly strengthen my vote. So it did, but I was defeated. Yet I firmly believed, had that same plan been adopted earlier in the canvass I should have been elected with an overwhelming majority. The inspirations incident to five

murdered men had not time to permeate the public bosom and work out its true effect—the correct result for me.

As showing the manly fortitude with which I bore defeat and still labored for the welfare of our community, to my eternal credit be it said, it was my volunteered and candid testimony that secured the arrest and conviction of Tim Tank, and for his heinous crimes, seven months later, his life paid the full penalty.[1]

"Oh! this is too hideous to believe, even of you," gasped Mariah, and she fainted away.

Really, I never supposed that woman had my interests so at heart.

[1] This paragraph has been criticised as being overdrawn, but the author would remind the reader that it was only a few years ago that "Bat" Shea was electrocuted in New York for having committed murder under similar conditions, and from precisely the same motives as those herein accorded to Tim Tank.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

SUNDRIES

How beautiful the snow, how cosy the fire on the hearth, how transcendentally lovely the fullgrown blizzard, rolling along so majestically, how invigorating the frosty mornings, how absolutely entrancing is everything and anything that pertains to winter, are the gushing thoughts that rise up in your cranium and mine as we swelter in the summer heat. But alas! the fickleness of human nature! When our noses and ears are frost-bitten and our brows are being fanned by stinging zephyrs fresh from the Esquimau maiden's fair cheek, and we are stuck fast in a snowdrift, it occurs to us that there is really no earthly comfort outside of perspiration and large black flies, and that to hear the father of all mosquitoes singing his favorite hymn, and to feel his pearly teeth nibbling our flesh, would be paradise.

Funny, isn't it, you and I never got into a

"Stuck fast in a snow drift"

position yet but we wanted to get somewhere else in order to be perfectly happy. It must be the fault of this world; still Mariah has told me repeatedly in private that this was the very best world I should ever get into unless there was a radical change in my mode of living.

There it is again, you and I are all right, and so is Mariah, in our respective minds, but there is wide diversity of opinion in those minds and in the deductions whereby we have arrived at certain conclusions. There is a mighty discrepancy. Who appointed you or me or Mariah umpire in this case?

You and I are all right when we can have hash when we want it, but the trouble is we don't get that dish set before us until our craving for hash is all gone by and we have on a hankering for pea-soup. Then hash is disgusting. If you and I and Mariah could only be in some place we are not in, how great, how good we should be! By some strange freak in this little arrangement we are not in those positions, and so while millionaires are refusing to found colleges in heathen lands and establish missionary stations in the centers

of civilization, you and I continue to work off decayed cabbage at the ministerial donations and warrant spavined horses sound.

You and I and the other fellow, so far as pure goodness or genuine badness are concerned, stand on the same level, yet we must in honesty admit he has the advantage of us in the matter of brains. Still we, you and I and he, are all making use of our different-sized and different-numbered talents—not one of the lights has been stuck under a bushel and not a talent or a fraction of a talent has been buried.

Whether the use we put those things to produce white wings on the shoulders, or scraggly horns from the head, or something else awaits us, are questions we have preached and sung and philosophized and speculated over for ages; but it is a fact possible of mathematical demonstration that if certain teachings uttered near two thousand years ago, were universally followed, hell would be geographically beyond the borders of this earth.

Well, we have intended to do some marvelously fine things, but something bobbed up and smashed our grand intentions into splint-

ers, so that what we actually did, though still marvelous, was a great ways from being fine.

Now when I began this work I had in mind an elaborate plot to write into a novel. There was, of course, to be a deep, subtle lesson running through the romance, yet so nicely woven into the characters' lives as to be only pleasantly susceptible to the reader.

There was to have been Katie, the heroine, a girl of sky-blue color and curly ears and glossy brown hair and pimply fingers, who after repeated solicitations from Charlie, at last tumbles right into love with Charlie. Charlie was a good fellow of the place and would have made any good woman a husband, but in the meantime Jack, the all-around tough, has got into love with Katie and urges her to flee with him to the minister's, but while she is studying whether it shall be Jack or Charlie, Jack takes a bath, which causes him to take a severe cold and sixty-seven years later he dies. But before the occurrence of that happy event, Katie and Charlie become reëngaged, Katie having wisely decided that a poor living husband was better than a good

"Katie—the heroine"

dead one, and Charlie having pledged himself by all the powers, great and small, never, never to take a bath.

That, in brief, is the synopsis of one of the most intricate pieces of fiction a long-suffering world ever escaped. As the thing was mapped out in my mind, I have no hesitation in saying that from its beginning through to the thrilling, though sad, dénouement, the acute character delineations, the rich description of places and customs, the accurate portrayal of life in its various phases, should have made the work very rare.

But please observe, before I had completed the first chapter Mariah tuned up on that old, old theme, "Marriage," and in deference to her wishes I decided to picture some of the bright lights and coal-black shadows of matrimony, using the above-outlined plot as the groundwork, as before.

Well, I had the new arrangement fairly under way, when I was again rudely interrupted by Mariah on the subject of "Work," and to preserve peace and keep our household furniture in a saleable condition, I was again obliged to change the idea, but still I thought

I could use the main features of the original plot in a story depicting country life. With that end in view I diligently studied Agricultural Reports and had got so I could mix up love scenes with the cultivation of the stately sunflower, the country prayer meeting with the fanning of mild-eyed cows with milking stools—got so I could mix those things delightfully, and Mariah broke loose on "Religion."

It was going to be, as I feared, no use in trying further to pursue a definite plan in the work. Better go at these old antiquated, fossiliferous topics haphazard and close them out, so that if I survived the ordeal my future attempts would be free from such nonsense. But I did not abandon my cherished project easily, without first trying to discover some means by which I could carry out my first inspirations.

There was only one practical solution to the question and that was to swap Mariah for another Mariah. If I could get hold of a Mariah possessed of all of my present Mariah's virtues without having any of her failings, the world might yet receive the benefit of

my lofty plans. With that object in view I looked around amongst the Mariahs. There was Mariah Plug, who always appeared pleasant and smiling in my presence, and who, so far as I knew, was not given to argument.

She, I thought, was the Mariah for me. I was just at the point of suggesting negotiations of Mariahs with Mr. Plug, when it occurred to me that Mariah Plug had no money in her own name. The thought spoiled that trade for me. I couldn't possibly get along with a Mariah that didn't have money. Curious, but I considered twelve different Mariahs and in each case I was almost certain that I had at last found the correct Mariah, when, just at the fatal moment, just as I was to consummate the swap of Mariahs, I would learn that this Mariah had a glass eye, and that Mariah was a pugilist, and another Mariah was nothing but mouth and tongue, and so it proved with all those Mariahs.

Come to know them, each had as many imperfections as my Mariah. I gave up in despair. I must stick to and jaw with my own Mariah through all this rubbish, until the

" Mariah Plug "

climax was reached in "Politics," when I think Mariah also gave up in despair. And here you have the distorted remains of what were at the start the very highest intentions.

After all it signifies nothing, for it is written: Man is of few days and his nights are variable. He entereth the world and he snorteth. He draweth forth from a bottle the wherewith of life, until, by the swelling of his gums, he yelleth, and the father thereof, at such an hour as the moon is at its zenith, and the bullfrog singeth not, ariseth up, going to and fro with him that sweareth for teeth, and long and deep is his wail as he thinks of the Hymenean vows. Time tarrieth not, teeth appear, and he walketh among his fellow-citizens clad in knee-breeches, and his garment pockets, from insufficiency of size, fail to accommodate several hundred of different, sundry, various, and miscellaneous articles, both old and new, garnered from a multitudinous assortment. He weepeth, for his soul is sore vexed. His mind soareth after knowledge and he proceedeth to institutions of learning, but the master therein useth the rod.

Verily, life is darkness.

He entereth his fourteenth summer, and behold his neighbor's daughter is comely and fair to look upon.

He goeth up to that neighbor's house and the daughter yeaeth, but the head of the household loometh up and nayeth with the might of both feet.

He goeth abroad in the earth and cleaveth unto rectitudes not perpendicular. His soul assumeth a grasping hue, and he claweth in diverse places for gold, but others are also clawing, and behold the beings are full of experience and he sinketh upon his back a minus quantity financially.

He desireth to serve his country, and aspireth, but his friends are not of the majority, and it is discovered that in his youth he was very wicked.

He draweth his feet up under him and forgetteth to breathe, and the neighbors gather thereabout and marvel right out loud of the man's many virtues and dazzling brilliancy, but he is not of the earth, and his ears listen not to earthly jabber.

Many there be who travel in roads strewn

"Nayeth with both feet"

with fine gravel stones, and whereby the stately mullein stalk rears its graceful plumage, and the dashing hornet trills sweet melodies and warbleth his bit, but they are not of the majority.

And so time, and I, and you, and Mariah move along.

Nothing in my life for two years past to remind me of those sweet days agone, when Mariah declared in resonant whispers, that I was the best, the greatest, the only—but why repeat it—I was the universe in short, excepting when a thunder storm is in progress; then she flies to my arms and nestles, and coos and woos, with the old-time emphasis.

Mariah don't know to this day but what I have concealed in the hollow of my hand all the thunder and lightning going and can cause the stuff to obliterate her any moment I wish.

Please not misuse my confidence by informing her of the true nature of thunder and lightning, or who controls it. Once she learns the true facts in the matter, my only weapon for reducing Mariah to proper subjection is gone. My only means of finding out whether

she loves me or not is destroyed. The only link which binds Mariah and me to the past will be broken.

You cannot, you will not be so heartless as to tell her.

Adieu, Mariah.

WITH THE PLUGONIANS OF PLUGOLIA

BEING A TALE OF HENS
AND SOME OTHER PEOPLE
ALSO LEAVES FROM THE PLUGOLIA
GRANGE JOURNAL

"WHEN THE CLOCK OF TIME
CLICKS DROWSILY BEHIND THE DOOR
AND TRIFLES BECOME THE AMUSEMENT
OF THE WISE AND GREAT."

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

THE PLUGONIANS OF PLUGOLIA

THE Plugonians of Plugolia didn't differ so very much from the Plugonians of other Plugolias. As a matter of fact there was no special reason, aside from little differences in weather and scenery, why the Plugonians of this Plugolia should differ from the Plugonians of other Plugolias.

Candidly speaking this is a funny old world!

Indeed, for all the kinds and shades and variations of an up-and-down, self-regulating, easily-adjustible, now-you-see-it-and-now-you-do-not article of fun, this is the most thoroughly comical world of which I remember of ever having been an inhabitant.

So perfectly ridiculous and such an absurd conglomeration of odds and ends that couldn't be used in other worlds.

A side-splitting farce, an idiotic comedy, dramatized, staged, and hurled into space, by the Author of the Universe, has had an unin-

terrupted performance for six thousand years or more, including free daily matinees, morning and afternoon; everywhere meeting with deafening applause and soul-inspiring encores. New imbeciles, new costumes and new situations dazzle the eye every time the curtain rises.

Admission fees, your life.

No discounts for either age or beauty or brains or freaks. The circus grounds of the Gods, the planet Earth, sustains huddled together in laughable confusion, all the deformities and grades and species of deformities that the diseased stomach and torpid liver of a universe could disgorge from its aged system.

I surmise that this terrestrial camp and the fixtures thereof is merely a light entertainment, got up chiefly to amuse a higher order of beings. A side tent in the rear of the main pavilion. A nickel show of continuous vaudeville. A grand aggregation of all sizes, shapes and colors of monstrosities, its place among the real performances of the creation being as an atom to the Solar System. When superior intelligences become weary with the cares and observations of something of real merit, they

obtain recreation and rest by gazing at the absurdities of earth life. It's a brain tonic, a nerve quieter to them, these boyish pranks.

All is humor.

And all people, from the sedate Adam to the modern circus clown, have been and are humorists. Yet humanity professes to be serious, quite likely would feel injured should you accuse them of being of a humorous turn, the idea prevailing that a humorist is one who does nothing but think queer thoughts, make absurd remarks and snicker. A blameless species of imbecile that exists on corn husks and other cheap fodders, and is placed on exhibition to make us smile, when we very proper people are in a smiling mood. How restful and gently exhilarating, watching the curious doings of the people in the monkey cage. Just for the moment we forget that all are possessed of baboon-like tendencies. Excuse me, what I intended to have said was that we are all humorists.

What is humor?

The dictionary defines Humor as a fantastic twist of the imagination, which produces a pleasing condition of the mind—a tickling

sensation of the soul. It also explains the difference between the humor that beautifies the roadside of our traveling companions and the article that causes the same companions to fervently beseech God for our premature death.

Just here it may be well to distinguish between humor as spoken of and H-U-M-O-R (H in this case being pronounced hard, the harder the better), and also defined as a tickling sensation, but accompanied by an itching attachment, which arouses a laughing and irresistible desire to scratch. To make myself clear on the point of pronunciation, pardon a slight digression. In my youth, I was endowed with delicate touches of H-U-M-O-R and humor. To relieve the former, my mother groomed me semidaily with the juices of boiled poke root (Phytolacca decandra, O sainted weed, I shudder in remembrance of thee), a remedy, during the application of which I was possessed with an uncontrollable impulse to dance numerous jigs, and to crown the situation with special lustre, I was bathed in a solution of sulphur and grease, which gave people, on my approach, the impression that a little corner of the infernal regions had appeared.

The remedies produced the desired effect. To purge the humor from my system, a humor that a heartless world failed to appreciate, my father applied small lots of birch lumber. From those cruel days to the present, I have never given utterance to a scratch or invented a joke.

But all those things depend on the angle of vision, on which part of the play one is acting, on how one looks at it. Some tears are good for smiles with others.

But, as I was saying, this particular Plugolia was chiefly an agricultural Plugolia. A quiet town, and as is the nature of things, Plugonians of other Plugolias, having other callings aside from the farm, were numbered among its inhabitants. It has been observed that where there are Plugonians in whatsoever Plugolia, that physicians and lawyers and preachers and millers and blacksmiths and all the other forms of human virtue and depravity congregate. Plugonians of whatever Plugolia have pains and get married and die and want houses to live in and so forth and so on.

This Plugolia was represented by the vari-

ous species and types of Plugonians. By the way, do you know of any Plugolia, large or small, that is not so represented? Every little Plugolia, howsoever humble, has a military genius that would have sent Napoleon into apoplexy, just from sheer envy; it has a literary prodigy whose conceptions would have buried Shakespeare and the great authors in oblivion as mere commonplaces; while statesmanship, music, science, art and drama have made some little progress under the leadership of the Gladstones and Lincolns and Beethovens and Angelos and Newtons and Irvings, nothing was ever really done until these later-day Plugonians took those matters in hand. All questions of state, all questions of a possible questionable nature that could by any means contain a question, were discussed and analyzed and revised and enlarged and sent forth to other Plugonians of other Plugolias, there to be considered and critisised and added unto until all the Plugonians of all the Plugolias had dissected and whittled the whole into a shapeless mass, that could be healthfully digested. A gloriously good thing it is, too, this twisting the cords of brotherly love and

"Has a military genius"

sisterly charity into a bond of sympathy. So long as poor old slab-sided humanity has adhered to that idea, so long has the human family made progress. Then, again, why shouldn't the Plugonians study into, and manifest an interest in all these affairs? Their muscle, their brain, their blood are woven all through the building—they are the structure itself.

The Plugolia we are considering had hills, thus, of necessity, making more or less valleys, through which coursed streams; there were fields and forests and fishes and birds and animals of various numbered legs; the sun and moon and stars were just as neighborly to this Plugolia as to other Plugolias; the birds sang as sweetly and the flowers bloomed as brightly and as fragrantly; and man planned and worked to build up or tear down, just as diligently as at other Plugolias.

These Plugonians had among their number, a few people that answered to the name of Plug; some that were known under the title of Rasinhels, others that were called Blowhards, a small number of the Tank species, and several of that very rare and choice type of humanity, known as the Hedupps; there were

"Sometimes Tommy B—— and Susan J—— would go home round by Four Corners."

also a few Smiths and Jones and Browns mixed in just for luck.

No Plugolia would be complete unless it contained an occasional Saphead, with one or two Yahos hitched on for appearances; but we shall meet them now and then as time moves us along.

In the course of human doings, the Plugonians of this Plugolia established a Grange, and why shouldn't they? Many of the Plugonians of many other Plugolias had their Grange orders.

And so it came about that more or less of the Plugonians would wend their way to Pluggolia Hall, on certain specified nights, and there transact the necessary business of the order, discuss current events, read the Journal, spend a social hour in games, swapping yarns of this, that and the other happening, a little promenade or dance, and then the Plugonians went out into the night, to their homes, the stars, the moon in its season, or a kerosene lantern showing the road, and the night hawk and crickets, or the snowdrifts and ice for company. Sometimes Tommy B—— and Susan J—— would go home round by Four Corners,

come to think of it, there were several young couples that used to stroll homeward that way, too, said that it was the nearest way home. Uncle Pete Snow said, "It was three miles further that way for Tom B—— and any dumned fool might know it."

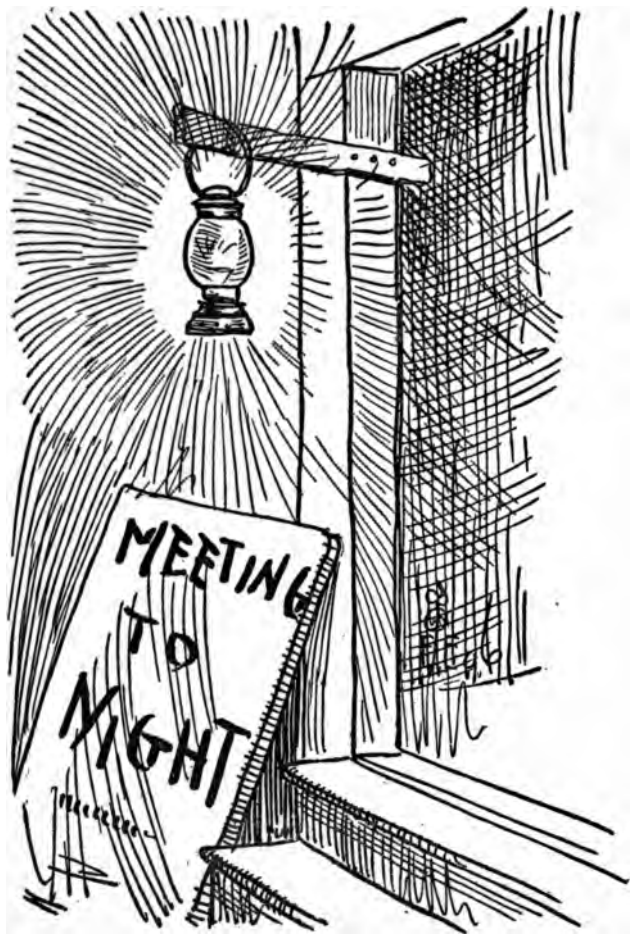
But what is distance when nobody is in a hurry but time?

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

LEAVES FROM THE PLUGOLIA GRANGE JOURNAL —MEETING OF OCTOBER, 1900

THE Plugolia Grange held its meetings at Plugolia Hall, and Plugolia Hall was the Town Hall of Plugolia. Plugolia Hall stood as near the geographical center of Plugolia as the wrangling nature of the Plugonians would permit. This site was chosen and Plugolia Hall erected eighty-eight years previous to this date, and two years after Plugolia was organized as a town. Now and then a decayed sill was replaced by a new one, a bit of an improvement made here, and a modern idea tacked on there, but Plugolia Hall was eighty-eight years of age just the same.

If its old walls be given the power of speech, many a tale of joy and sorrow, religious and secular; many a yarn of wars and rumored wars—wars of words and ballots, could it relate. It had witnessed weddings and funerals; its old sides had shook from the merry dancers



"Held its meetings at Plugolia Hall"

and repented in "fear and in trembling," when the parson told its hearers that a gulf of awful dimension, filled with highly combustible material, awaited them, unless there was a radical change in the order of things.

But evolution was making tracks in various directions in and about this Plugolia, the same as at other Plugoliaa. We almost smile, a very respectful smile of course, when we look backward two or three generations, and compare the conditions of our grandsires' lives with the sublime freedom and simplicity of today. On this subject, Mr. Alpheus C. Hedupp read a short paper entitled "Then and Now," which was a portion of the Plugolia Grange Journal, for the meeting held under this date. In explanation, will state that the Plugolia Grange Journal was not a paper published under the editorship of one person, but it consisted of various articles on various subjects, written by various members of the order, each contribution being read by its author, and after the reading, various comments and discussions were in order, according as the treatment of the subject had impressed its hearers.

"Then and Now"—By Alpheus C. Hedupp:

"When we think of the monumental heights we have attained unto as a nation of liars, and the almost superhuman progress we have made in pure, unadulterated, general cussedness, and consider through what excessively minute gradations of evolution all these great achievements have come up to us, belief is almost staggered.

"Less than one hundred and fifty years ago, say about the time of Indian Joe, when the shores of our fair Plugolia Lake (then vulgarly called a pond) were surrounded by dense forests; when the ancestors of some of our yet toiling citizens [here Mr. Hedupp gave the Plugs a withering glance] used the sun and the lengthening shadows for a timepiece; the melting snows, the budding flowers, the ripening grain, the fleeing birds, and the cold north winds for an almanac; when they used fir boughs for a bed and the star-bedecked ether for a covering, and propelled themselves from place to place by actual walking or riding some log down the streams, their travel being guided by barked trees or the north star or

some other absurd thing, we can hardly believe the story. It is also chronicled that these peculiar people used to amuse themselves by warring with the Indian, ruthlessly murdering bears, wolves and other companionable insects; that they spent many lives and much money freeing themselves from a foreign power, and in liberating ignorant slaves; why, it is related that gross labor, like clearing up the forest, tilling the soil, building railways and ships, twisting wires all over the old ranch, were among their favorite pastimes. Absurd as were the doings of these strange creatures along the lines mentioned, authentic history compels us to go down into the lowest depths of superstition, following in their antics along spiritual ways.

" It is stated, and the statement is borne out by documentary evidence, that at one time in the history of this diminutive race, they were so far gone as to actually believe in the existence of a God; believed that forces from out and above and all around were working in unison with their endeavors; that the great, invisible being, whom they called God, guided and strengthened and helped all those who

obeyed his law; that those old monstrosities were so far down in the gutter of ignorance, at one time, that they believed in the manhood of man and the womanhood of woman—believed, think of it, in this day and land of unfettered liberty and refinement, that purity of living and honorable action in every detail of life, was the only way to live; that labor, real work, was elevating, not only right but beneficial to all mankind.

"Very funny, the way these old fellows looked at things.

"But the climax of their foolishness was reached when they started out as followers of a Nazarene. It seems that about 2000 years ago, an alleged being came into existence, down in Nazareth, who advocated, among other laughable ideas, 'Peace on earth and good will toward all men'—introduced a system of living that would have made all mankind poor but happy. And away went those old fellows preaching and believing that stuff.

"As incredible as it may seem that doctrine attained such a following that it required years of education and practice to get entirely away from its baleful effects. By mere accident,

and by accident apparently, have come many of man's greatest inspirations, it was discovered that a man could perform all manner of tricks and live, not only live, but live and be highly prospered while so doing—but not until the Kerosene Drunkard had become owner of the entire Solar System and had a first mortgage on all of the best located stars of the Universe, did people really wake up to the situation—the work of emancipation was moving along at a good pace, we were very nearly out of the old boshy ruts of 'do unto others' and 'love one another,' when nature ushers into the world other people of deformed ideas—freaks of the rankest description. Only a few years ago, a boy of such degraded tendencies was born over here in New York, and he had scarcely reached manhood before he proclaimed that ancient monstrosity of a God that our fathers believed in, as the true God so profane even, as to speak in a slurring way of our dear God, Money, and ridiculous enough to urge, as a law to live by, that simple rule of the humble Nazarene, about allowing your neighbor a chance to shake the dice part of the time. It doesn't seem pos-

sible, but you know it as a fact, that that boy worked and fought and progressed along those absurd lines, until he inveigled himself into the Presidential chair of the United States. No sooner there, than he begins to bombard the country with such old antediluvian ideas as rebates, and that a man has no divine right to more than one wife and twenty-four children.

"Shades of Brigham Young, rescue us or we perish!

"To the most careless observer it is apparent that something must be done or we go back to the semibarbarous conditions of fifty or a hundred years ago.

"What is the remedy?

"Simply this, we must see to it that enough men are in the great and the small positions of the affairs of state and nation to keep the people from being burdened with wealth and comfort; men who are not above picking up fifty or a hundred thousand dollars, when they happen to run across it, and deducing therefrom whether to yell Yea or Nay when the roll is called on important (?) measures; men who have some true understanding as to the

fitness of things, and are broad enough to protect their own and their friends' (?) financial and political interests; men who have energy enough to beg, borrow, buy, or steal all the ballots and everything else that is necessary to protect our glorious liberties. Speaking of ballots, the legend runs that those old choppers of wood and shovelers of muck used to preach and actually practice to a large extent, that the ballot was sacred—a thing of God and honor. Think of it, the ballot is nothing, and never was, but a little slip of paper, with a name on it, yet those creatures handled it as though home and immortality depended on it, but gradually a broader set of men developed, and that little simple strip of paper, it was learned, could be sold just as well as eggs and other produce.

" But the real foundation of our trouble, today, lies not only in trifling things like ballots, rebates, and similar nonprogressive ideas that many of our fellow citizens are trying to uphold, but in the mulish persistency with which some people cling to that old, worn-out, narrow God that the first settlers upheld. Times have changed, and while the little lives that

former generations were living, could get along in their contracted sphere with a God of small dimensions, the broad, strenuous life of to-day demands a God huge, liberal and progressive. The history of nations shows conclusively that nations have advanced or receded, just in proportion to the size and kind of a God they have worshiped. As citizens, as Grangers, as people who are trying to get the human family up onto a higher plane, we must, each of us, see to it that the little old wooden God of a hundred years ago does not supersede the magnificent gold-trimmed, diamond-inlaid, do-as-you-please-but-be-sure-and-grind-the-small-potatoes-fine God, that the advanced students of human destiny have set up in this land, where the eagle ever flops his wings over liberty and equality."

When the reading of "Then and Now" ended, Uncle Pete Snow, who, it was noticed, had been extremely uneasy, exclaimed, "By gosh, if I couldn't talk better'n that dumned Hedupp, I'd keep my mouth shut."

Whether the remark of Mr. Snow, or "Then and Now," was the cause of the loud and prolonged applause which followed, will

" Uncle Pete Snow "

probably never be definitely settled. Some said, and among that number were the Plugs, that it was Uncle Pete; others, including the Yahos and Blowhards, with equal decision, said that it was Mr. Hedupp's able effusion that caused the outburst of applause. The point itself would be immaterial ordinarily; but a feeling, which already existed in the community and seemed to be growing in the Grange, somewhat prejudiced to the Hedupps and tending to create unfriendly factions, may make a little space of genealogy excusable at this point.

The Hedupps were a comparatively new species to this Plugolia, though of long and respectable standing in some Plugolias. The name indicates Dutch origin, but this particular branch of the Hedupp family came about through the mixing in marriage of the Hedupps and Slobbers, and the Slobbers and Yahos, and an occasional marriage of a Hedupp and a Blowhard, and the town records showed that a Rasinhel and a Hedupp made a successful matrimonial trip, a generation back.

But one thing the records did show with an emphasis, that no Plug-Snow-Brown-Jones-

" The Hedupps, a comparatively new species in Plugolia "

Saphead, or other piece of common clay, had ever been to the marriage altar with a Hedupp. The Hedupps were well-to-do people, there was nothing very bad about them, and not so very much of anything else; "pretty good people, what there was of them, and there was about enough of them, such as they were," as the boy said about the butter. They were laundered, body, soul, and shirt, just the same for weekdays as they were for Sundays, and while they could be approached by all, there were some who felt ill at ease in their presence. It was probably this I'm-a-little-better-than-you-are kind of feeling, which the Hedupps seem to emit, that accounted for the feeling toward or against them in the neighborhood—as the case might be.

At this time resolutions of sympathy and condolence were read and extended to the Jones family, on the death of their three sons. The little fellows, Ernie, Johnnie and Sammy, aged eight, six and four years respectively, died September 28th, from scarlatina. They went suddenly and the same day.

All Plugolia felt the terrible blow. The Hedupps, the Plugs, the Tanks, the Blow-

hards, the Sapheads, the Rasinhels and all, admitted, for a brief moment, that in the great chaos of things, all are the merest atoms. Why is it we do not feel for our fellow travelers only as the terrible looms up?

Agnes Brown read the following verses:

Three little men came from Heaven
  Of the earth to take a peep,
But of the labor soon grew weary
  And quietly sank into sleep.

Three sets of eyes are dreaming,
  Three pairs of hands are cold,
Three little forms are sleeping—
  Waking within the fold.

Three small voices are silent,
  Three little prayers are told,
Three pairs of feet are resting—
  Marching on the streets of gold.

Three crushed hearts are bleeding,
  Waiting here below,
Wailing the awful mystery
  Of why the three should go.

Three angels singing near,
  "Christ the Redeemer liveth,
And to such as we, oh parents dear,
  The Father his kingdom giveth."

THE UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

"Can't understand why them boys had to go, just now. By gosh, it's tuff," said old Pete Snow, a sentiment which covered the whole situation, and in which all sorrowfully and silently concurred.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

HUMOR AND HUMORISTS

THE Plugonians of the sundry Plugolias are humorists, and the Plugonians of this particular Plugolia were no exception to the rule.

All are humorists and equally so.

The reason that all people are not equally distinguished as humorists comes about through our failure to recognize what constitutes humor in the various natures. Again, it is generally believed, that unless one's mouth be stretched from ear to ear, one isn't laughing, or isn't a humorist, or isn't tickled. Science has fully demonstrated that one's facial expression may or may not be evidence in this case. The features might be distorted into horrible grimaces and at the same instant the inside man, the soul, be shouting for joy, and vice versa. In all the range of human experience, can there be found a phase of life so little understood as is this matter of humor?

THE UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

Why do we laugh at the trials of Mr. Micawber?

Life to him was a most serious affair, and when he is down in the lowest depths of despond, watching for something to "turn up," his neighbors and friends are laughing the loudest.

Being a humorist or being tickled are governed by the same laws and rules as the other procedures of life; custom, adoption; somebody else is being funny or laughing. A thought, a circumstance, may be absurd, possibly painful; still certain people are tickled over it and away goes faddish humanity haw-hawing and hee-heeing over something that wasn't funny at all.

Humanity acts in unison.

We want this and that and thus and so purely and only because so and so does, and has and sees those things. We travel because others are traveling; we admire that sham, solely because somebody else is admiring it; we call a tragedy a comedy, and a comedy a farce, for the reason that a few fossils over yonder have given that definition; we laugh and weep and do lots of foolish things, when

there is nothing visible for us to laugh or cry over—because others are laughing or weeping or being idiots; and it isn't such a bad way, after all, that enables the Plugonians of this Plugolia to go ambling along, goose file, after the Plugonians of that Plugolia, until the joy or sorrow, or whatever it is, has penetrated the systems of all the Plugonians, even unto the uttermost Plugolia.

Sometimes there is act after act of the stupidest farce in the performance, or so it seems to those who sit within the orchestra rail watching the shifting scenes. Laughing or crying or being indifferent, as the occasion demands. On the stage, behind the curtains, it may be different; possibly the performers are living tragedy—deep tragedy—wallowing in despair.

Who knows? Who cares?

But what is the audience doing?

Laughing—well, then, the proper thing for you and me to do is to laugh too.

Why do we laugh?

Well, why are we born, or why do we eat pie, or why do we have the measles?

Questions, either of which, if answered scien-

tifically, would require a volume, and when thus elaborately answered, would cause some learned crank to argue against the correctness of your views, which, in turn, would consume yet other volumes in proving your first volume correct in the premises. Simply this: we do all of those things at intervals, more or less regular, and numerous other gyrations of mind and body we indulge in on sundry occasions, simply because we cannot help ourselves; also because we want to; at that particular moment no other form of human idiocy could give such genuine pleasure as the laughing or eating or having the stomachache. We should be homesick and other people would too, if we didn't have the blues and stir up things when the spirit moved us. That tickling sensation of the soul would remain unsatisfied; the programme would be incomplete.

But it doesn't necessarily follow that because all people are not scratching in unison, that some are denied the sublime luxury of itching; it demonstrates, only, that all humanity at sundry times and from sundry causes are laughing—the cannibal with his missionary pie; the miser with his gold; the musician with

"The Miser with his gold"

his greater range of voice; the doctor with his newly discovered prescription; the child with a new toy.

So you perceive that the theory is correct.

What theory?

Why, that all people are constantly on the lookout for some absurdity to be tickled at—can be tickled and are tickled. The antiquarian, the scientist, the lexicographer, all delving away with patience, even enthusiasm. One continual tee-hee for years and years, endeavoring to unearth some buried mummy; or trying to discover whether some remote and unheard-of wretch was ever born or not; or trailing off down through all literature, attempting to tree the derivation of some insignificant word; or searching the heavens trying to calculate the trotting gait of the latest meteor.

Such insipid performances would cause you and me to choke to death from actual thirst, yet to the parties mentioned those labors are a feast of the funniest fun. We give the doctor of divinity a first-class barroom joke and wonder why he doesn't laugh, whereupon, we immediately proceed to the stable and expatiate upon the greatness and beauties of St.

Paul's life and discuss theology until the stable boy, in self-defense, treats us to a complex combination of eleven-jointed profanity, with just English enough mixed in to show what is thought of our intellectual condition; and again we marvel at the stupidity of some people.

No discrimination.

There you are, giving Beethoven "Lucky Jim," simply because it pleased you. You reasoned that it must be the topmost round of musical composition—genuine harmony—but you are horrified, grieved, when the King of Symphonies heaves the piano stool at your head, and as if in atonement for not having completely annihilated you, he plays from Op. 27, No. 2, during the performance of which you imagine yourself in places that you are not fitted for, either by habit or by study, and incidentally you realize what constitutes music and the class of humorists to which Beethoven belongs.

What next?

Why, you left that presence filled, overflowing with moonlight sonatas, adagios, rhythms, and poetical sounds, and it all was so brilliantly

easy, you will just call at the Plugs on your way home and give them a taste of real music. The Plugs were nice, appreciative people, always went wild over "Lucky Jim," hence the sonata must produce in them the same high aspirations that it awoke in you.

It must be so.

But the Plugs were not delighted. Somehow their dumpy old piano didn't have any soul in it that day; you had known for a long time that it was a miserable instrument, anyhow, and you got everything mixed up, excepting what you left out and what you omitted was really the hit of the occasion, until Mrs. Plug, who is a genuine Christian, kindly relieved you and your listeners by suggesting that you sing "Lucky Jim," so soon as you are through with those finger exercises. Of course, do not sing until you are weary of piano practice.

The Hedupps, the Rasinhels, the Blowhards, the Beethovens, the Plugs, and the rest of the family are exceedingly funny folks; but why are we so destitute of tact and diplomacy in this matter of humor?

Humor is a solution of life compounded en-

tirely from the three ingredients, tragedy, comedy, and farce; just three shows to get hilarious over on this detached corner of the universe.

Humor in blood?

Most assuredly has tragedy contributed more toward keeping the people mirthful than the combined jocular efforts of all other human circuses.

Let us briefly look over several pranks of several fellows at several times. Pharaoh ranks among the world's greatest humorists, yet the murdering of infants was his chief source of fun; Nero fiddled for joy when blood-curdling brutalities were going on about him; when the poor victim of the Roman arena, by any skill or chance, saved his life, did you notice how gloomy and sad seemed the people? But when the lion has torn and rended the poor fellow, and they hear the cracking of the bones in the monster's mouth, please observe the fluttering handkerchiefs and listen to the wild huzzas, tumultuous applause. Robespierre severed heads by the cart load and danced with glee; Han of Iceland laughed only when he had human blood for a beverage

and for a drinking cup he used his son's skull. Mark Twain, gazing in idiotic wonder at the statue of Christopher Columbus, and inquiring in imbecile-like tones, "Is—is he dead?" would go how far toward producing a smile on the features of a King Henry the Eighth? Poor humor, that, for a great mind, but when Henry's lovely eyes gaze on the morning landscape and he orders that a wife of his be deprived of her head that afternoon, then his cultured countenance beams with hilarity, and his great humorous soul laughs right out loud. Owing to some miscalculation of nature, Henry didn't die quite dead, or wasn't properly buried, or the crematory fires wouldn't cremate, or something occurred whereby his fun-loving soul refused to sail away to other spheres of the creation; and so it comes about that the wife-murdering humorist is still with us. In this connection, it is pleasing to notice how marvelous have been the strides of civilization. Rarely, now, do our Henrys resort to the cumbersome guillotine or the blood-curdling ax, but, instead, gently administer rum and infidelity and other soothing remedies, thus making the entertainment twice as

"Is he dead?"

long, and consequently four times as funny. Then there are the Peter the Hermit class, bordering on facetiousness, these fellows, with their laughable crusades of starvation and murder, to here and there and everywhere, so full of the roll-over mirthfulness to them and as funny as a Dante's Inferno, to others. There are the fine and the vulgar and all the shades between, and the—but why specify? The world is full of them; all are humorists.

True humor exists—it can't be manufactured at so much per line; that is, not the real humor, the genuine article, that scatters little glints of sunshine, here and there, and makes us think that the birds are singing sweeter, and that the flowers are blooming brighter, and that this old world is a pretty good world after all.

From gentleness to blood; from refinement to coarseness; from reality to sham; from the sublime to the ridiculous, is but a step in either case, and the merest nonsense by one is considered wisdom by another. A side-concussing joke, in our Plugolia, is regarded as the boiled-down quintessence of dullness—a sure cure for insomnia, in another Plugolia.

THE UNTAMED PHILOSOPHER

So complicated is the matter of humor, that blessed, twice blessed, is he who knows, at a glance, just the kind of a grin to wear among whatsoever tribes his tent may be pitched.

Real humor, like real love, or real music, or any other real reality, can't be made, or bought, or sold, or won—it's there, it is.

Keep on the funny side of the road, which is, also, the sunny side.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

LEAVES FROM THE PLUGOLIA GRANGE JOURNAL NOVEMBER, 1900

THERE is a big family of the Rasinhels.

They are hardy as well as prolific, and whether it is owing to goodness of soul and habit, or natural toughness of body, or some special providence holds them in charge, cannot be definitely stated here, but truth it is, that never a Rasinhel dies except of extreme old age.

After the routine business of the Grange had been gone through with, and after an able and lively discussion of the question, Resolved: —" That there are more wise men than idiots in Plugolia," which was immediately decided in favor of the wise men, by a jury of peers, selected from the Plugonians, to carefully consider all the arguments offered, pro or con, the worthy Lecturer announced that papers on the following subjects had been prepared, which the authors would read:—

" Shakespeare," by John D. Rasinhel.

" Love," by Rev. Pax.

" The Census Enumerator," by J. Francis Yaho.

" Shakespeare:—

" Shakespeare was born with only one head and two legs. His legs, though considered useful, did not attain prominence until later. He was a youth of some precocity, yet failed to introduce any new Sabbath-school ideas.

" William's father was a financier, and by far-sighted operations and deep-laid schemes, succeeded in being poor, which, of course, interfered with the education of his children; but William was of a brave nature, and continued to bring in the kindling-wood just the same as if nothing had happened, until his nineteenth autumn, when a delicately constructed female of twenty-six blooming winters yanked him up to the marriage altar.

" William's troubles waxed and he had outbursts of poetry; other outbursts also descended on him, and he bursted out of a gentleman's deer pasture with unbecoming hastiness. Poor William! surely, troubles in

those days did travel on each other's corns, yet he suffered with fortitude.

"But the earth was just as big those days as it ever was; so, leaving his young wife and three children, still younger, he went to London, and obtained work in a theater. Here he continues to be the same unassuming Bill, contenting himself with the smallest office the institution affords. Presently, however, an idea went meandering through his soul, a most singular freak of nature, because ideas were as scarce then as now. So one morning before breakfast, he scribbled off a few tragedies, comedies, etc., and such-like in dramatic form. The deed was performed without malice and for the express benefit of his show.

"Billie struck oil when those inspirations were penned, all kinds of oil, for uncounted swarms of actors, for critics, publishers, reviewers, editors, commentators, and compendium manufacturers.

"Armies of beings have hustled over, under, and all around poor Bill to wealth and fame, and yet scholars swell up unto burstification and loudly proclaim that Shakespeare wasn't a scholar. It's quite possible that he was a

"Scribbled off a few tragedies"

little slumpy in the dead languages, still the peculiar style in which he handled the living ones, and monkied around amongst fifteen thousand English words, or fourteen thousand, nine hundred and seventy-three words more than the average Shakespeare enlightener can wrestle with, proves him to have been something of a scholar.

" Consider, for a moment, the consequences had William received the blessings of a football-college education—polished by years of stimulated journeyings in foreign climes, and then had gone to work and put in his number one licks, remembering it is claimed that what he actually did was the product of an uncultured brain—composed in the brief interludes of the morning chores. Ponder—had Bill been educated, sat up nights and let loose all his capabilities, and really written something, why, the entire creation of the globe would have been engaged for countless centuries on one vast compendium of appendicial helps to Shakespeare.

" Certain people have attempted to prove that Shakespeare did nothing in literature, because he was unscholarly and of doubtful

morality. They assert that he was a great cipherer and ciphered all through somebody's else book. That he died and got up one night and ciphered all over his gravestone.

"The student, who is chairman of a Shakespeare Club, requested me to say, in behalf of the Club: That we put no credence in such slanderous yarns—we admit that William may at times have held himself aloof from some rectitudes—that maybe his gait, at times, was slanting—that possibly he wasn't refined and scholarly—but we, as one solid unit, do not believe that there was any Francis Bacon about William Shakespeare."

The regulation amount of applause followed the reading of Shakespeare, which is saying that the Plugolia Grange had acquired the habit of applauding every utterance given vent to, regardless of speaker, subject, or merit. In a way, this was a good and a bad custom, good in that it gave the younger member the courage that a little praise always does; bad in that an effort really deserving stood on the same level as much feebler attempts. Mr. Thomas W. Blowhard said it gave him

great pleasure, this brief, yet comprehensive and analytical study of William Shakespeare, and that the Grange had been lifted up and carried away, as it were, into the ethereal regions of thought, and he hoped that these high journeyings of the cranial fixtures would continue.

"Love," by Rev. Pax.

"Love cannot be won: it comes unsought. It stays with its own. How, or why, or whence? Those eyes looked into your eyes, when and where?

"Where, away in God's domain, did those heart-strings become twisted up and entwined about your heart? Somewhere in your eternal journeyings, you have felt there was but the one heart. You may be far down the earthly turnpike, and just as if by accident stumbled onto the rest of yourself.

"Bliss—Heaven.

"It's all so clear now; not since that old, wrinkled, gray-headed and bowed form you called mother, went over into the cemetery and beyond, have you experienced that feeling. But now those other eyes are with you.

"Whatsoever the route you take, asleep, awake, your tears, your smiles, that heart pulsates in unison with your own.

"You are in love.

"Don't ignore it, don't try to stamp it out. It's a priceless gift, the richest that the great Father of all can give. It came from that throne where the 'greatest of all things is love.'

"Accept it.

"It is life, purity, happiness, success; the building of all those qualities which go on and on.

"Those eyes are looking into your eyes, that soul is your soul, and your soul belongs to it, and the one soul is Christ's—is love.

"You may not take the same train to the next station, never mind, eternity's conveyances will carry you up, around the pike, by and by, and you will see those eyes and feel that soul, from out the throng, watching, waiting, only for you.

"Love, eternity's love, here and now, for all time, is for the two, now one.

"Receive it, light gathers about, the heavens are filled with gladness.

"My children embrace it, rendering thanks to the great Author of all love, that you are in line with the universal destinies."

Contrary to the custom, no testimony of appreciation was given at the conclusion of "Love," excepting that Miss Betsy Slobber (aged fifty-three years) gave out a long mournful sigh, looking, as she did so, with wishful, anxious eyes directly at Ezra Jones, a bashful bachelor of fifty-six years.

Ezra blushed.

Plugolia had recently been visited by a Census Enumerator, as Mr. Yaho's paper is evidence.

"Some of the leading questions of the Census Enumerator, as I remember them." By J. Francis Yaho.

"1. Were you born with artificial teeth; if so, how many?

"2. Did your father have a head on him?

"3. What is your color when washed?

"4. How many of your sons are males?

"5. Were you ever hung by the neck until dead, or married?

"Ezra blushed"

serious accident. It appears that Mr. Hedupp, in the excitement of some of the plays, so far forgot himself as to actually rub against Alex. Plug, and his attention to the belittling situation was called to mind by his sister, Victoria Genevieve Hedupp. Had Miss Hedupp made her brother aware of the terribly humiliating circumstance gradually, his injuries would have been less severe, but she blurted out the alarming situation so suddenly that H. Longfellow Hedupp lost all presence of mind, and not only rubbed against Plug again, but came in contact with a Brown and a Saphead, which caused him to faint. In the midst of the excitement Uncle Pete Snow yelled, " Slosh a pail of water in his face, he'll be all right in a minute."

Uncle Pete's directions were followed with the best of intentions, but with more or less disagreeable consequences to Mr. Hedupp.

Somehow the Hedupps had lost interest in the Grange for that evening, and a feeling of dampness seemed to permeate the other members, and all felt that there was no better place than home. It was time, the hour was eleven thirty-five P. M., and those people who labor

" Slip—slosh—slush "

must mingle occasionally with the gods of slumber. November with its snows, and ice, and thaws, and mud, caused Jim Jones to unconsciously poetize out loud, and as he slipped on the ice and floundered through the mud, the night air carried his song:

Slip—slosh—slush,
As homeward we wallow
Through this beautiful Autumn
Mush.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

LEAVES FROM THE PLUGOLIA GRANGE JOURNAL

If the Rasinhels were as good as the Sapheads; if the Sapheads knew a sixteenth part of what the Blowhards claim to know; if the Hedupps were as companionable as the Joneses; if the Browns were as good to work as the Plugs; if the Yahos were as near perfection as you and I are; if there weren't any mountains to climb over; if there weren't any bogholes to wade through, and if this Plugolia was where that Plugolia is, and if these Plugonians were just like some Plugonians you once knew (they are dead now) and if there hadn't been any automobiles constructed, this world would be almost like a place in which you once lived.

But what's the use of all this, why isn't why which?

We are here now, and this is a little suburb of Paradise or a preparatory school of the other country, just accordingly as we clear up

the brushheaps of despair, and make the grass of good cheer to grow all over the old place.

Thousands of human (called human) lives are lived, that are as much beneath the animals as the animals are beneath the gods.

And yet—the great machine keeps grinding, eternity keeps tossing and shaking the atoms hither and yon; the heights, the depths are always in view, always beckoning—and how much easier to go down than up.

How cold was this January night, the night for the Grange meeting—the air cut clear through to the marrow.

God pity the poor; the rich are shivering. Desolation, despair, death was in every gust —yet the mighty majesty of such a night could but be admired. The elements are holding carnival over some faraway event, and what if a few little human driblets are sacrificed on the occasion? A symphonic fantasia is being given in some other corner of the worlds, and those cold shafts are little breezes that preserve the harmony—merely, a trifling semiquaver worked in for effect, in the allegretto movement. So wrap the rags a little closer about the child, drawing him a little nearer

your chilled bosom—you and the child are freezing—dying—and God is good and man is the devil.

Poor children, if you could keep the breath a little longer—spring is coming; the foliage, the fragrance, the music in the air are almost here, just around the first bend in the road, up there.

It wouldn't be supposed that such a night the Plugonian Grangers would turn out, but they did; an average attendance was present. The night was bitterly cold, so cold that the most aged of Plugolia admitted that nothing in the shape of cold weather had ever approached it, excepting two occasions; one was when Pete Snow was lumbering on Cole Mountain, and while Pete was loading the logs, the oxen (he had a pair of big Durhams) froze solid. Pete got his logs loaded and chained, and yelled "git up," but the cattle didn't stir, so Pete hit the near one a cut with his whip, and the ox was frozen so solid that he crumbled, just like powder, and before Pete could make up his mind as to what was going on a gust of wind took the powdered remains of that ox away. The other time—well, better

"The night was bitterly cold"

not repeat it, it might affect a reputation for truth and veracity.

But the roads were good this night, so the Grangers turned out, filled the old box-stoves of Plugolia Hall with rock maple, shivered and talked about the weather, until the meeting opened, and then for a time, who thought about an everyday affair like weather?

With the regular order of the meeting through with, the Lecturer read the following, as programme for the evening:—

DISCUSSION

Resolved: That Farming Does Not Pay.

Aff.	Neg.
Thomas W. Blowhard	J. Francis Yaho
Elihu Saphead	James Plug

An article on Evolution . . By Charles Jones
Poem . . . . . By H. Longfellow Hedupp
An article on Marriage . . . By Abner Smith

It is not the purpose, nor is it necessary, to give herein the arguments, one side or the other, of this discussion. The question was well looked into on both sides, by the regular disputants and volunteer speakers. However, it may not be amiss to give some of the figures as given by a speaker on each side. In trying

to make out that farming did pay, Mr. Yaho advanced these figures, on just one branch of farming, as showing the possible profits:

HENS.		*Cr.*
50 hens, average 52 doz. eggs per week.		
52 by 52 equals 2704 doz. eggs per year.		
2704 doz. eggs at . .	$0.40	$1081.60
1827 lbs. poultry at . .	.20	365.40
Eggs and poultry used in family		98.00
Total		$1545.00
HENS.		*Dr:*
To wheat and corn		$0.08
" meat and shells		0.03
Total		$0.11
Actual profit		$1544.89

Remember that this is only one of Mr. Yaho's arguments in favor of farming.

Mr. Blowhard offered the following statement as showing that farming did not pay:—

FARM	*Cr:*
By 7500 lbs. butter	$1500.00
" pork and maple sugar	170.00
" income from hens	0.13
Total income	$1670.13

FARM	*Dr.*
To interest on money invested . . .	$270.00
" help and board	500.00
" purchased feed	800.00
" taxes and insurance	100.00
Total expenses	$1670.00
Actual profits	0.13

But what do figures prove?

Figures prove anything and everything, just according to which side of the account they are placed; that old proverb about figures never lying, is away off, but the board of decision in this case decided that the figures proved farming to be a profitable venture, so we will let the figures rest, and hear the paper on " Evolution," by Charles Jones.

" The first man was a grain of sand; he lived alone by the sea; the sea washed him daily, also gave him motion, which after several millions of æons (as we scientists say), caused the natural coadulation of the centripetal inherency of the promulgative forces to evolve him into a fly; the fly, by attending strictly to business and reading only standard works, was greatly surprised and pleased on awaken-

ing one morning to find himself a caterpillar; the caterpillar aspired, and became a treetoad; the treetoad, being more or less of a contortionist, jumped into a squirrel's skin, just as the shadows were turning into gloaming; the squirrel retired to the seclusion of his gorduous study, dismissed his valet, and, by a trick of legerdemain, known only to the ancients, twisted himself into a full-fledged ape; the ape, one A. M., when an awful quiet seemed to pervade the haunts of woodchucks, dressed up in the best fig leaves the house afforded, brushed his hair, called himself Adam, 'phoned to his chauffeur to bring around the auto, and struck out, up and down the earth.

" Such, in brief, is the beautiful story of our humble start on this earth, and such is my reason for giving this little discourse on Evolution.

" I very much regret that time permits me to touch only the rudiments of this wonderful subject.

" Evolution, properly defined, I have been told, means simply evolution, and it has been generally conceded in all ages, by scholars and people of broad culture, that the only true,

"Phoned his chauffeur"

sensible, and unprejudiced definition of monkey is monkey, hence we have not only a heterogeneous homogeneousness in the two sciences but also a fossiliferous similarity in the words themselves.

"There is a trifling discrepancy of a few million years, among scientists, as to the time when monkeyology and evolution first obtained a foothold upon this globe; however, baboonological mythology is pretty positive in declaring that anterior to the establishment of dry land, neither of those institutions existed. It is equally certain that monkeyology must have preceded evolution, otherwise there would have been no material whereby to evolve evolutionists.

"The discovery of a few well-shaped, well-preserved, and highly respectable-looking bones, a few years since, in the South Arctic regions, proves conclusively that somewhere about seventy-two million brief autumns ago (some state it seventy-four million, others place the date at seventy million years, I take the point halfway between to avoid conveying any erroneous ideas) our classic ancestors were gracefully suspended, in midair, by their tails

from the limb of a palm tree, in an African forest.

" Evidence, which is now in my possession, demonstrates beyond question, that said tree was a palm tree, and stood within a few feet of the eastern bank of the Nile, and also that there were present, at this particular meeting, four full-grown, four-legged, and perfectly responsible individuals. They were not watching the shining waters of the Nile, and basking in ease and idleness, as might be supposed from the above cosy description. No, they were people who had very high conceptions of what life should be, with very limited educational advantages. They had in some mysterious manner (which has thus far escaped the keen delving eye of science) become strongly imbued with a desire, which amounts to a resolution, to rise above their present condition, to assume a more comely form, to reduce the number of propellers by at least one-half, to reduce their tailward tendencies toward longevity.

" Surely history records no instance of such magnanimous, self-imposed suffering for posterity. Nothing could affect me more keenly,

but when I saw the four grooves, situated about twelve inches apart, worn so smoothly to depths of two inches, together with little clots of blood and hair, I gave way to tears both of sorrow and joy. Sorrow for what my respectable parents had suffered that I might not be encumbered by useless appendages, joy for the fact that this discovery would close the mouth of scoffers forever on the subject of origin.

"I shall not here write of the ages and ages that rolled away before the completion of this marvelous transformation. The change was brought about by such microscopical gradations, so excessively minute, in fact, that millions of years elapsed ere these humble plodders could, with any degree of certainty, bet upon the longitudinal prolongations of the coming heir. In my work on the 'Eradication of Extensions' are fully and ably discussed all points in regard to the great subject."

"By Gosh! I don't believe you can make anything out of one of them dumned monkeys but jest a monkey," was Uncle Pete's comment on "Evolution," which seemed to be the con-

sensus of opinion by the Plugonians, and so the paper was dropped without further remark, and complimented by the usual applause.

The Lecturer said that he was pleased to note that Mr. H. Longfellow Hedupp had so far recovered from his injuries as to be with us; that Mr. Hedupp had, while recovering from the injuries received at the last meeting, drowned the anguish of pain, by composition, and one of the efforts thus produced would now be read.

WHAT IS IT?

O far-away and one-eyed Sun.
Dost thou cause the wrinkling, blinkling,
Twinkling of yon star?
Dost thou feed the razzling, brazzling,
Dazzling moon?
When the cows come up the run?
Dost?

O fair-legged incipient grasshopper!
Art thou the connecting link,
Twixt butterflies and potato bugs?
Art thou better fried in butter
Than stewed in cauliflower?
Art?

O red-faced and baldheaded infant!
Wilt thou shriek and scream and screech
And wail anon?
Wilt thou assassinate thine aged family
With such diabolical weapons?
Wilt?

For this phantasmagorical trip into the inaccessible ravines of thought, to which the Grange had been transported on the soothing, slumberous wings of Mr. Hedupp's song, the Lecturer said he felt that he but voiced the sentiment of every member when he said that for scholarly, classical attainment, we had among our members a student, a poet whose like it would be impossible to produce.

"By Gosh! I guess that's so," ejaculated Uncle Pete.

When order again reigned, Mr. Smith read his essay on "Marriage."

"It doesn't require any great profundity to get married, according to man's law, but it frequently comes about that the parties thus bound by man are just as fit for each other as extreme opposites could be—as unlike each other as possible to be constructed. As Hades

lightens up the landscape of the matrimonial road, man comforts the afflicted by repeating that ancient injunction, 'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' All the bad there is in it is charged to God. Because imbeciles and drunkards and hysteria and thieves and epilepsy and prostitutes and abnormal conditions of all kinds come together in marriage, and replenish the earth with all kinds of physical, spiritual, and intellectual disease, the result must be charged to God.

"A very easy way to get rid of responsibilities, if it only works. What had God to do with that class of marriage? Nothing more than he has to do with the pranks of rabbits and mice.

"Two lives, two souls, two hearts come together in wedlock—are supposed to be one. One starts, is already started by heredity, in the direction of the high and beautiful; the other, also by generations of degraded tendencies, is determined to go hellward, and so they meander along the turnpike, plucking the sweet-scented flowers and bull-thistles, either side the roadway—endeavoring to make a palatable dish out of honey and wormwood.

The marriage feast has been the starting point of more human woes, of mind and body, than have ever struck out from any other point. It is success or failure, joy or sorrow, balanced or unbalanced generations to follow.

"Marriage is from God, of God, but God is nature and nature's laws must be obeyed. Why curse God for the ill effects of the marriage of a snake and a dove, or of a weakling and an athlete?

"God works by laws that allow no trifling.

"Greater living is possible than ever before, we are thinking greater thoughts, doing better and worse performances along all lines.

"But why shouldn't many of the strange phenomena of marriage be visible to the eye of the soul, before the parties get so far along the road that there is a general overturning of all hands? There are the laws of body and soul, obey and be happy, or disobey and go down dragging the innocent with you, into the gutter.

"If the venture isn't successful, what a blessing it is to have God left, to curse for the failure.

"In the cars a few days ago," said Mr.

Smith, " in the seat directly in front of me, sat a newly married couple; as I couldn't help but hear their conversation, I made a note of it, and I wondered why it was that we do not know some things until afterwards.

" They said:—

" ' Wifey, did you take along enough honey so Hubby can have all the sweet he wants every day, and Hubby won't ever, ever caress Wifey with the stovehook if Wifey doesn't ever, ever throw hot water in Hubby's face, and Wifey WILL ALWAYS KEEP her angel locks curled and just the cutest wrapper on when she and Hubby are alone, and fondest fond won't ever be seen out in company unless his sweetest sweet can be with him, and Dovey and Ducky won't say hard words or throw furniture at each other, and Hubby will never ask questions of Wifey when Honey ask Sugar for money, and Toot-se-woot-se won't assassinate her pop-se-wop-se when Ducky wants to join some secret society, and Hubby won't ever think that Wifey's beauty is fading, and Duckiest Duck and Doviest Dove will be head of the family together, and Candy and Raisins won't ever use profane lan-

guage, and Hubby will remain home every evening with Wifey and Wifey won't be satiated with Hubby's society, and Katie, a road that requires your Charlie and his Wifey years to travel is liable to contain some rough spots for Doviest and her Duckiest, but Katie will make the spots smoother for her Juiciest-Juice and Charlie will just take his Spooniest-Spoon in his arms and carry Dewdrop over the bad places.'

"'Oh, Pa!'

"'Why, Ma!'"

Just here the words, in a familiar tone, came floating across the hall, "Wal, if that ain't dauby as molasses in dogdays."

Mr. Smith continued:

"But——

"But why but?

"Let us hope that it may always be thus. That the cooing and the wooing may go on and on; that the wrinkles may be as dear as the dimples; that no little coffins, or intemperance, or infidelity, or anything whatsoever that maketh unhappiness may come between Pa and Ma, as they journey onward."

Applause.

Out into the cold again, the Plugonians went, homeward. Little Sam Jones was heard to inquire "What you suppose become of Uncle Pete's other ox, that was up on Cole Mountain?" and the jolly voice of Bub Brown came back in answer: "Guess he went up into the dimmering, shimmering, glimmering moon, that the poet told us about."

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

HENS

(By invitation, this chapter was read at a Plugolia Grange meeting, at which time I was led to believe it might be required at a banquet of the State Grange, but after being carefully considered by the Chairman of the State Board of Agriculture, aided and abetted by the State Veterinarian, it was decided that the interests of science demanded its suppression; while admitting it a beautiful and glowing tribute to the hen, it was disrespectful to the microbe as a species, and tended to discourage all aspiring microbes in the pursuit of a classical education.)

It is highly fitting, that the hen, one of earth's most thoroughly esteemed and useful citizens, should, after centuries of ignorings, at last become the subject of a banquet toast. That I am given the distinguished honor of first representing these industrious, law-abiding people on a postprandial occasion, is an

honor for which I am deeply grateful; yet I realize my inability to do the subject full justice. However, I assure you that my labors have been with the sincere intention of rendering a just tribute to that wonderful piece of architecture, the hen.

In the first chapter of Genesis we are informed that on the fifth day of the creation hens were manufactured, or exactly one day earlier than man was created, and two days after gardens came into existence.

Thus it will be readily observed that if we pay proper respect to the order of creation, gardens have the first right, hens the second, while man must be contented with the third position in the race.

But whether we recognize the fact or not, gardens and hens have, since history began, been closely related, and that relationship, though assailed by every conceivable form of missile and profanity, and subjected to all the vile slanders the centuries could invent, still remains firm. Hens and gardens are one and inseparable to-day.

This circumstance, though it may appear trifling, is valuable evidence, as proving the

eternal constancy of a hen's heart, showing that once her affections are won, she belongs to your garden until death embraces her. In this connection, a celebrated writer remarks:—"Of late years I keep fowls instead of a garden, formerly my neighbors kept fowls and I kept a garden."

For years I have made a special study of the hen, and the more I become acquainted with her profound and cultured ways, the more truthfully can I exclaim with the poet:—Verily, the hen is a marvelous beast, and lo, she is filled to overflowing with that which causeth a man to ejaculate in a foreign tongue.

Intellectually the hen is not a dazzling success. Her low, narrow forehead indicates a lack of brain force and spirituality, and several other fine points which, from a theological standpoint, go to the making up of an ideal life; yet her regularly carved features from the chin up to and including her nicely shaded eyebrows, furnish a landscape of much diversity and beauty as well as much food for profound reflection to the thoughtful observer.

But when we consider this matter seriously,

" Intellectually the hen is not a dazzling success "

it is indeed surprising how little progress the hen has made. The hen of Adam's time, with limited educational advantages, knew just as much of literature, art, music, and the sciences, as the hen who has enjoyed the benefits of living in this century. As a race, the hen is not ambitious, does not aspire beyond the feats of her ancestors, content to waddle along in the same old ruts, won't even try to do any better than the hen of ages ago.

One egg per day was their achievement in the beginning, and one egg per day is all you can extract from the beasts at this period, and the day and all attending circumstances must be extremely favorable to get that.

Allow me at this point to say, I do not consider this entirely the fault of the hen. Evidence tends to show that poultry keepers have not properly endeavored to increase the producing capacity of the hen. While we have doubled and tripled the products of the cow, etc., we have strangely enough been content to let the hen go on in the same old way—one egg per day—whereas by careful attention in breeding and strict regard to important details, it is not improbable to suppose a variety of hen

could be constructed that would produce several eggs per day, to the single hen.

For instance: in the average flock of thirty hens, we get from one to two eggs every other week, from the entire lot. Two eggs at two and one-half cents each, equals five cents, cost of feed for 36 hens for eighteen days, not including trouble, equals 420 cents or a net profit to someone of 415 cents, but instead of such small results, suppose the new style of hen produces an egg every seven hours, it becomes evident to the candid student, that the net profits would be greatly increased.

So far as I am aware no scientific, known reason exists why a hen answering this description shouldn't in due course of time make her debut in American society.

Why, for a moment consider the astonishing feats of the potato bug, born in extreme poverty and short of stature and absolutely destitute of refining influences and feathers; yet producing 3,456,795 eggs every second.

Of all the monstrosities of nature the hen justly occupies the first place. This bird, without teeth, can masticate anything from a scythe factory down to a dime novel, thus

proving conclusively that all this bosh dentists have stuffed our heads with in regard to teeth, is nothing but a swindling commercial scheme.

The products of the hen, it is written, have lifted mortgages, educated children, and caused domestic and neighborhood quarrels; an animal born without ears, yet hearing distinctly all rackets from the falling dew up to an earthquake; given only the regulation number of toes, still this feathered beast can scratch over more ground, in a given time, than can be gotten over with a steam harrow. She ushers into this cruel world an egg which of itself contains all the ingredients necessary to life, and then cackles over it the same as other folks. And so we might continue to enumerate the rare accomplishments of this musical wonder, but time forbids. Suffice it to say, a marvelous piece of mechanism is the hen.

I am daily in receipt of inquiries as to how I have attained such success with hens. In reply will say my methods for care of poultry are extremely simple:

I groom my hens carefully, twice a day, with a two-horse hay tedder, this treatment

having tendency to prevent the lice from oversleeping, gives the blood an active circulation, and also livens up the brain tissues. Occasionally a hen should be fed—the old idea that a hen needs nothing to eat has become obsolete, modern science proving beyond question that a hen has a stomach and one gizzard concealed about her person. For morning feed I give my hens scraps of barbed wire fried crispy, well mixed with dried sole leather or barn door hinge; at noon the creatures are treated to boiled sewing machines, lightly frosted, with baked piano legs and discarded hairpins, with a drink of milk-warm hoe handles. At night I give them pepper seasoned with French-fried bricks. This treatment has produced very gratifying results and is an inexpensive and easily prepared bill of fare, with the exception of the drinks, for the hen is a practical temperance worker and never indulges in intoxicants. Will also add, that excepting one or two instances, I have never seen a hen refuse to lay after a proper application of a common sled stake, and the judicious use of a broadax soon worked an effectual cure in the obstinate cases. Hens that persistently re-

fuse to set I place gently under a two hundred pound anvil and they invariably set.

Being an ardent admirer of the hen, I am greatly grieved to learn that that ghastly disease, tuberculosis, has at last got its horrible fangs hold of this bird of promise. If true, this is a very serious question in the hen problem, a condition of things, in fact, which threatens, if nothing is done to stay its progress, to totally annihilate the human race as well as the hen tribe, for science shows that the scholarly microbe meanders from the hen to the egg and then wades through the human system.

Prof. Doflicker, an extremely skillful idiot, in his keen reseaches in behalf of the physical welfare of man, noticed that one of his neighbors, a gentleman of ninety-seven years and eleven months and twenty-nine days of age, died, having eaten more or less of chickens and eggs in his brief life. At the same time the Professor also observed that a rooster of the place was suffering from indisposition. The fellow (I'm speaking of the rooster now) though partaking of his regular rations with apparent relish, besides disposing

"The rooster had a fever"

of all dainties his admiring female friends presented, seemed to be despondent and would frequently stroll about the lawn standing on both feet, and repeatedly that summer he had been seen to wink with the under lid of his right eye. There was also an unnatural flush on the left cheek and his front teeth showed that decay had set in, but the most alarming symptom in the case was the fact that the Professor was quite sure the rooster almost coughed, once.

The more he considered the matter the stronger grew the theory with the Professor that the old gentleman's death and the peculiar illness of the rooster were in some way connected; that the same breed of bacilli caused the trouble in each case, but to prove the theory correct and establish a scientific fact, an astounding piece of originality was resorted to, which opened up to a dazed world a sorry circumstance.

Professor Doflicker applied the tuberculin test, and sure enough the rooster had a fever, which was thought to be some form of contagion, probably tuberculosis of the right ear.

The rooster was murdered and his remains

tenderly hacked to pieces and squinted into by the Professor and his awe-stricken neighbors, but no indication of disease was discovered in any of the organs, with the exception that within the gizzard was found the shank of a sidehill plow, two lengths of stovepipe, and an undigested monkey wrench. Upon a more thorough examination, however, there was found underneath the nail of the second toe of the rooster's left foot a black spot, which the microscope proved to be a full-grown, college-educated, American microbe. Science had won another victory. The theory was correct; the old gentleman and the rooster had died from precisely the same cause.

But enough.

In closing I will express the sincere hope that this bug-eating, garden-scratching, humor-loving, profanity-breeding, and life-giving bird, vulgarly called a hen, may long flourish and wax through the earth.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

POETRY OF FARMING

Good authority informs me that to read a response to a toast is the height of all earthly impropriety; therefore, I shall read my response, but before doing so I beg permission to repeat that time-honored preface:—"I didn't expect to be called on to speak and so am not prepared."

Poetry is rhyming and farming is climbing; thus it will be readily observed that the two sciences are closely related. Indeed, so nearly in the same channel do these two soul-stirring, tear-producing, and stomach-stuffing labors run, that unless one is extremely clear of discrimination, one is liable to become confused and think they are penning the "Charge of the Light Brigade," or "Climbing up the Golden Stair," when in reality they are doing nothing but wielding the barn shovel or chopping cord wood, so rhythmical are the cadences, such mazy swinging time, so emotional and

soaring are the feelings in each case. The same can, in truth, be said of one when poetizing on cackling cows and bellowing hens, biting oxen and the music of the ever festive swine; the dazzling dew-bespangled violets; the singing, yet beautifully painted bumblebees; the heavenly scented new-mown hay and glistening scythes, why, one, when having such thoughts, cannot, without difficulty, refrain from grasping the pitchfork and plunging into the hayfield.

The fact is, when we candidly consider this subject in all its bearings, but one conclusion can be reached, viz:—poetry and farming are substantially the same thing, in proof of which, I defy anyone to write a poem of any considerable length and breadth of thought, without making more or less allusions to country surroundings, and in the sacred name of agriculture I defy anyone to perform farm labor without being frequently lifted by his bootstraps into the regions of song.

But, seriously, I believe the poetical possibilities of the farmer's life are equal, if not superior, to those of other callings, only let the right conditions prevail. That the average

farmer, under existing circumstances, is as happy and enjoys as many advantages as the average of people in other callings, I very much doubt. The poetry in most lives depends not so much on the greatness of this or that, as on a continued series of pleasing details—little things that breed sweet content, but many of those small affairs are beyond the farmer's reach. The farmer is no longer regarded as a distinct species, he has been proven to have peculiarities that place him beyond question in the two-legged class. He wants things, good, bad, and otherwise, but what are his opportunities?

Things have changed.

The larger activities of the world; the allurements of greater wealth and higher positions; the wrong ideas the public schools have fostered in regard to the industrial part of life; the being compelled to travel miles through all kinds of weather to see the circus and work late after returning, and numerous other reasons might be given why the farms have been left for more congenial vocations, all of which has tended to make the farms of large acreage and the owner thereof a drudge and his wife

a profane slave. It is the loneliness, the gloomy isolation that is everywhere present but does not comfort; the overtoil physically which deadens mental progress and the lack of and difficulty in obtaining pleasant and stimulating recreation, that murders whatever there may be of poetry in farming. Statistics show that a larger per cent. of farmers and farmers' families, in proportion to their numbers, are afflicted with insanity, than of other classes, a fact which is explained by some of the reasons stated and on the ground that unchangeable routine is dangerous to the mind.

That kind of farming is not poetry—it is the blankest of all blank prose, in every sense.

But suppose instead of being howling hypocrites, we should become insane and get to be genuine Christians—actually do by others as it would be pleasant to have others do by us —all the earth over, what then?

Why, great individual wealth would be unknown; grinding, starving poverty an impossibility; the vicious would gradually be hung, and man, in place of being a long-nosed, brass-

jawed, copper-bellied, and blear-eyed swine, would grow up to that poetry the Great Master told us of 1900 years ago. It is the fear of want and all the horrors that that implies, I believe, that makes the selfishness and cruelty of man; it is the hourly expectation that our souls, stomachs, and livers are going to be swallowed by somebody else that keeps us on the jump. Do away with this fear of want for ourselves and families; compel justice alike from the great and the small; let all laws be framed on the principles of love, the Christ way, and in place of extreme poverty and useless wealth and needless sorrow will be found joy and plenty and time to live an ideal life.

But up jumps some one-sided crank and howls that all laboring people are good, absolutely good, and that all capitalists are bad, decidedly wicked. He is positively sure of it, no exceptions. First one then another echoes the sentiment and in a little time a great army of humanity is whooping up the virtues of labor and cursing money, never having paused a moment to consider that there is reason in all things.

There is just as much meanness, just as much goodness, to the cubic foot, in the laboring man as in other classes, and vice versa. A ship must have its commander and its sailors; an army must have its generals and its soldiers; all works must have a head.

As well say the Navajo Indian, left alone, would have attained unto as high degree of enlightenment, as to say the man who has foresight, constructive ability, and the power to command and skillfully direct labor, is an enemy of human progress.

Let brains and labor that are moving in unison and harmony, alone.

Don't get pessimistic, stop howling calamity. There is more good than evil in Gomorrah. The rank and file of humanity have fought and are fighting a good fight. They are creatures of generous, noble impulses. But it may be well occasionally to take observations and see whither the craft is drifting; the same kindly worlds are looking down on us; the same old earth is gushing forth its bountiful treasures, and man's brains and industry are bringing the old farm a little nearer to the ideal each year.

If black-hearted pirates and vicious idlers have got aboard the old ship, let the ship's crew raise its standard of thinking to such a plane that they of the evil designs must slink away and die from pure disgust with themselves—Judas fashion. Let the fact be distinctly proclaimed, by right living, that all have rights God-given. That monumental piracy of wealth, position, honor, and purity cannot be longer covered up by self-praise and a hypocritical glorification of the humble Nazarene; that it is as much a crime to steal millions of dollars as it is to steal a loaf of bread; that right is right because right is in harmony with the occult forces of the universe; that wrong is wrong because wrong produces a discord in the same universal laws.

But what of farming?

For instance, in this section of Plugolia today, three families are pretending to occupy 1500 acres of land, whereas that land ought to be divided into sixty farms of twenty-five acres each. Sixty families instead of three to contribute to the social, the intellectual, the everything, in fact, which makes life worth living. Twenty-five acres of a farm means

" Black-hearted Pirates "

labor enough for good bodily exercise, without physical exhaustion. It signifies supplies for all the reasonable wants of the family, if the land be employed to its full capacity. It gives time and disposition for social pleasure and intellectual culture. It makes man a man among men. It lifts the farmer and his family out of a living grave into the light of human companionship. It gets the poverty-stricken out of overcrowded cities into God's daylight, where they belong. It makes life a pleasure and adds nobility, instead of being a farce. In brief, it is poetry, or in the beautiful language of the poet of old, it enables one to "Dwell under his own vine and fig tree." But some wise fellow remarks, "That's that old chestnut about equal division of all property, it won't work, its been tried, time and time again."

Hold on, my friend, it's nothing of the kind. It's simply the thinking and doing and actually living that little old, old rule of "Doing unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." So simple and yet so difficult.

Peoples, Republics, and Nations have arisen

and flourished until a certain point of civilization was reached, when corruption worked into the structure and then decay.

Decay means death.

With man's best works came avarice, dishonesty, impurity; unscrupulous men led the masses still farther down; the old building was beginning to groan under the load; "From out the great silences," no longer came help, as there did when the fathers were fighting for liberty and building on justice and honesty and once again the finger was tracing the sentence "On the wall," and once again poor old humanity looks up and about and behold the Universe is serene; the earth, how rich in all things needful to an earthly existence, and God is good—is love.

But that is history.

While it is true that this nation has been erecting Golden Calves and other graven images; that into the structure has worked such a desire for wealth and fame; that such a pace has been set in the acquirement of these useless baubles that certain ruin stares all in the face; it is true, also, that never before at this stage of humanity's career has there been such a broad

feeling of "Charity toward all"; such a strong sentiment of brotherly love and so great a feeling of right for right's sake. So terrific was the pace set, that honor was lost sight of; men and women of finer ideals were coming up from all the walks of life, defeated in the battle and rather than continue the struggle, climbing over into the graveyard.

Suicides!

A great army of them each year going in despair to the cemetery, and that through no fault of their own; but driven to the deed by those shadows of the pit, that are neither man nor beast—a cross between reptile and devil—moral idiots and degenerates in every particular. Another Joshua assisted by a few soldiers, ministers, and movable crematories should take this wolf-clad, hog-proboscisized, idling crowd away into the wilderness and let time bring about the needed changes.

That scheme worked once.

If love, the "do unto others" kind of love, prevailed hereabouts there would be:—

Less devils;

Less millionaires;

Less paupers;

Less doctors;
Less preachers;
Less lawyers;
Less overworked people;
Less idle people;
Less of the good acres idle and more of those things which abide.

And tramps would die from indigestion and apoplexy—no form of evil can live where love is.

Love would do away with armies and the like the world over, with the exception of what Joshua needed in the wilderness, training the degenerates; love would do away with numerous other senseless and expensive luxuries we now indulge in, and the money and force thus used in making man believe he is going to Heaven sometime, could be utilized in making this little strip of eternity more like Heaven, so that most of us would be in better condition to appreciate the beauties of the heavens beyond. As a matter of fact, many of us are such uncouth, and spiritually illiterate creatures that we should appear awkward—out of place in God's best rooms. We have been crowded and jostled about so much here, that we haven't

had time nor opportunity to curl the mustachios and smooth out the wrinkles of the soul.

Why is this?

All because the strong take no thought for the weak; because no one could stop to give the cup of water here; say the helpful word there; do a little steadying yonder—all bustle and hurry.

What's your rush?

Where are you bound to?

This time and this clime are a portion of Heaven or Hell—just as poor, human will makes it. You have got all the time there is, and all the old bones of the centuries are rattling about your withering soul, telling you that the great wheels and the little wheels of the Universe are revolving on the principle of right—pure, simple, absolute right; that no progress can be made in any other way.

"Think on these things."

Think.

Continue to think.

Or go on with your idolatry, rush, scramble, crowd, until the time comes when you will stop, and when you stop, you will stop all over, and

"What's your rush"

when you are stopped, allow me to suggest that you leave your bonds and gold and all contraptions of a like nature, here. The worm and the rust and the crematory fires will make those things well-nigh unpassable, and while you are about it perhaps you had better let the earth remain here, too—it would be a bungling thing for you to manage, when traveling through space, besides, the old farm may be needed for others a while longer.

Hurry on trampling the lessons of time into the mire, failing to learn that right is right; that no power can paint or cover it up; that love is the great central force of the worlds; that light and love will illumine the right and must conquer, or centuries, ages, and æons of brains and idiots and angels and devils may wax and flourish and pass to the winds and the song of the poet continue to be:

"There is the moral of all human tales,
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
First freedom, and then glory; when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last;
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